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ABSTRACT

This book examines how to generate successful professional development programs. There are 14 chapters in five parts. Part 1, "Set the Stage for Powerful Professional Learning," includes: (1) "The Case for Powerful Professional Learning"; (2) "Stretch Goals, Deep Change, and a Compelling Vision"; and (3) "A Compelling Vision for Professional Learning." Part 2, "Provide a Context for Professional Learning," includes: (4) "Develop the System to Improve Learning"; (5) "School System Responsibilities"; and (6) "A Goal for District Action: All Schools as Professional Learning Communities." Part 3, "Develop School Leaders," includes: (7) "School Leadership" and (8) "The Development of Principals and Teacher Leaders." Part 4, "Develop Teachers," offers: (9) "Focus Teacher Development on Student Learning" and (10) "Continuous Improvement of Teaching and Learning." Part 5, "Get to the Heart of the Matter," includes: (11) "Look for Root Causes"; (12) "Lead for a Transformation in Professional Learning"; (13) "The Power of What We Think"; and (14) "Create Schools in Which Everyone's Job Is To Learn." Each chapter presents suggestions for discussion. (Chapters contain references.) (SM)

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Designing

POWERFUL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

for Teachers and Principals

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for Teachers and Principals

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INTRODUCTION

Each year, dozens, if not hundreds, of research studies, reports, articles, and books are published with the intention of improving the quality of professional learning within schools. Scholars, practitioners, and reformers have written them for audiences as diverse as teachers, administrators, school board members, and policy makers.

Unfortunately, all this information is producing only marginal improvements in the quality of professional development in schools. While particular "lighthouse" schools and school systems are the exception, my sense is that professional development as it is experienced by most teachers and principals is pretty much like it has always been—unfocused, insufficient, and irrelevant to the day-to-day problems faced by front line educators. Put another way, a great deal more is known today about good staff development than is regularly practiced in schools.

Tinkering around the edges of improvements in staff development is insufficient. I feel a sense of urgency because I want high quality professional learning to benefit students who are now in our schools, not their younger siblings or their own children. Adding a day or two to the inservice calendar or having workshops on cutting-edge topics with nationally-recognized presenters is not enough.

So why prepare another book on this subject? One reason is my desire to place in one "container" my best thinking about the qualities of professional development for teachers and principals that improves leadership, teaching, and the learning of all students.

A second and more important reason for preparing *Designing Powerful Professional*

Development for Teachers and Principals is that I truly intend it to make a significant contribution to the quality of professional learning in schools. The ideas presented in some books are so powerful in themselves that they produce dramatic changes. For instance, I remember a well-regarded authority in the field of science saying that his life was changed and the direction of professional life altered by reading Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*.

Unfortunately, this is not *Silent Spring*. If this book is to make a significant contribution its readers must have a different kind of relationship with its content and with one another than is typically the case. I will describe this relationship more fully below. My wish for you as a reader is an approximation of the sustained engagement and interaction I have had with the book's ideas as I organized and gave them meaning in writing.

NSDC'S INTENTION

Designing Powerful Professional Development for Teachers and Principals was originally published on the web in order to promote among educational leaders a more detailed and fine-grained vision of professional development, a deeper understanding of standards-based professional learning, clarity regarding next steps, and a sense of accountability for putting improvement plans into action. For the purpose of this publication, educational leaders are all those who shape reform efforts and professional learning within a school or school system. They include but are not limited to administrators, union leaders and other teacher leaders, school board members, parents, and community members with an interest in the quality of public education.

NSDC's goal is that this book stimulates discussion and dialogue over a period of weeks and months by one or more leadership groups within a district or school. While there is no single correct way to use this publication, because it is intended to deepen understanding and increase commitment to action, its value will be best realized by a group whose members have authority to make important decisions. The book's contents will be most thoroughly digested in bite-sized amounts over a period of weeks or months. If experience provides a meaningful guide, simply reading the chapters will do little to improve the quality of professional learning in a school or school system. What is important is readers' depth of engagement with the text and the quality of discussion and intensity of motivation provided by a study group.

At the conclusion of each chapter, I provide a list of the major assumptions contained within the chapter. These assumptions are offered to stimulate dialogue within the group about important issues related to the subject of the chapter. Each chapter also includes dis-

cussion questions for group use, with each list concluding with a request for "next actions."

THE ROLE OF DIALOGUE

Conversation is a learning tool that can deepen understanding of a subject. For the purpose of this book, NSDC recommends using dialogue, a particular form of conversation, whenever possible to identify common ground and build bridges of understanding among group members.

"Dialogue ... imposes a rigorous discipline on the participants," Daniel Yankelovich writes in *The Magic of Dialogue: Transforming Conflict into Cooperation* (1999). "[W]hen dialogue is done skillfully, the results can be extraordinary: long standing stereotypes dissolved, mistrust overcome, mutual understanding achieved, visions shaped and grounded in shared purpose, people previously at odds with one another aligned on objectives and strategies, new common ground discovered, new perspectives and insights gained, new levels of creativity stimulated, and bonds of community strengthened" (p. 16).

The discipline that Yankelovich recommends includes equality among participants, an absence of coercive influences, listening with empathy, and bringing assumptions into the open while suspending judgement. Those seeking to maximize the benefits they receive from this book may wish to read *The Magic of Dialogue* or contact the organizations listed in its "Resources" section.

Because surfacing and nonjudgmentally considering your own assumptions and those of others is often a critical first step in deepening learning and creating shared understanding, I include my assumptions at the conclusion of each chapter. In the spirit of dialogue, I invite readers to identify and express their own assumptions and to encourage others to do the same. I also invite you to look for additional assumptions contained in the text but not listed at the end of the chapters and to seek out still other assumptions that may lie beneath those I've mentioned.

THE IMPORTANCE OF NEXT ACTIONS

Deep understanding and clarity of goals have limited value unless they are followed by commitments to specific actions by individuals and a sense of accountability for completing those actions. And, unfortunately, most all of us know much more about effective staff development, teaching, and leadership than we practice on a regular basis.

In *Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity* (2001), David Allen writes,

"Over the years, I have noticed an extraordinary shift in energy and productivity whenever individuals and groups installed 'What's the next action?' as a fundamental and consistently asked question" (p. 236). The result, he says, would be that "... no meeting or discussion will end, and no interaction cease, without a clear determination of whether or not some action is needed—and if it is, what it will be, or at least who has responsibility for it" (p. 236). Allen argues that "... shifting your focus to something that your mind perceives as a doable, completeable task will create a real increase in positive energy, direction, and motivation" (p. 242).

AN OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

Designing Powerful Professional Development for Teachers and Principals is divided into five parts with each part containing several chapters. The parts are (1) Set the Stage for Powerful Professional Learning, (2) Provide a Supportive Context, (3) Develop School Leaders, (4) Develop Teachers, and (5) Get to the Heart of the Matter.

Part I: Set the Stage for Powerful Professional Learning provides a rationale for sustained professional learning, discusses the advantages of stretch goals and deep change, and offers a detailed description of what new forms of professional development might look like in schools. The parts that follow elaborate on the types of professional development for teachers and principals that produce high levels of learning and performance for all students and staff members. The chapters they contain will describe ways to:

- Surround teachers and principals with a culture and support them with structures that encourage professional learning, innovation, experimentation, and the collegial sharing of new ideas and practices;
- Engage teachers and principals in professional learning that is standards-focused, intellectually rigorous, part of their daily work, and continuous;
- Deepen teachers' knowledge of the content they teach;
- Expand teachers' repertoire of research-based instructional skills to teach that content;
- Provide ongoing classroom assistance in implementing new skills;
- Create small teams of teachers who meet several times a week to plan lessons, critique student work, and assist in problem solving, among other tasks;
- Provide teachers with the classroom assessment skills that allow them to regularly monitor gains in student learning resulting from improved classroom practices;
- Connect teachers to teachers within and beyond their schools and to outside sources of

knowledge and skill; and

- Overcome the underlying problems that serve as significant barriers to the widespread use of the practices described in this book.

MY ASSUMPTIONS

- Dramatically improving the quality of professional learning in schools is desirable and possible.

- Reading a book and discussing its contents within an ongoing study group can create deeper understanding of a subject and clarity regarding a course of action.

- Using dialogue to surface and non-judgmentally consider participants' assumptions can deepen learning and create shared understanding.

- Asking and answering "What's the next action?" increases energy and promotes productivity.

FOR DISCUSSION

Write your assumptions regarding the areas addressed by my assumptions. Be specific and succinct. Dialogue with your group regarding your assumptions, remembering that the intention of dialogue is the nonjudgmental surfacing of assumptions rather than critiquing or seeking to change the assumptions of others.

Describe experiences you've had with books, articles, or other expressions of ideas that have had a significant effect on your work or personal life. What about the book or the circumstances that surrounded it led to the effect it had on you?

Specify what actions will be taken as a result of this discussion, who will take them, and by what date.

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PART 1

SET THE STAGE FOR POWERFUL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Chapter 1
The Case for Powerful Professional Learning

Chapter 2
Stretch Goals, Deep Change, and a Compelling Vision

Chapter 3
A Compelling Vision for Professional Learning

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THE CASE FOR POWERFUL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

[T]eachers who know a lot about teaching and learning and who work in environments that allow them to know students well are the critical elements of successful learning.

—Linda Darling-Hammond (1997, p. 8)

This book has a simple three-part premise: First, quality teaching makes a difference in student learning. Second, the professional learning of teachers and principals is a central factor in determining the quality of teaching. And third, district structures and culture that surround the school play a critical role in determining the quality of professional learning experienced by teachers and principals.

While it seems obvious, the first part of our premise bears repeating: Teacher expertise is one of the most important variables affecting student achievement. Linda Darling-Hammond (1997) expresses it this way: "That is, teachers who know a lot about teaching and learning and who work in environments that allow them to know students well are the critical elements of successful learning" (p. 8). If quality teaching is to occur in every classroom, all teachers must be supported in turn by skillful principals who work in systems that support their sustained development as instructional leaders.

Quality teaching in all classrooms and skillful leadership in all schools will not occur by accident. They require the design and implementation of the most powerful forms of professional development, the kind that is described in detail in this book. Unfortunately, the professional learning opportunities for most teachers are woefully inadequate to meet

the demands of today's classrooms. And in most districts the quality of professional learning for principals and other schools leaders is even less adequate in assisting them to meet the almost overwhelming challenges of their work. Nonetheless, the importance of high-quality professional development for teachers and administrators has become increasingly obvious to reformers and policy makers at all levels.

The past 15 years have seen a steady movement toward standards-based reform. As the pressure for higher test scores and other accountability measures increased, so too did an appreciation for the central role professional development must play in this movement and a recognition that this professional development must represent a sharp departure from past practice. Most recently, several national reports have emphasized the importance of professional development for teachers and administrators. One such report, *Does Professional Development Change Teaching Practice?: Results from a Three-Year Study* (U.S. Department of Education, 2000), is a longitudinal study of the federal Eisenhower professional development program. The study found that while teachers experienced considerable variation in the quality of professional development from year to year, when professional development was of the "reform type"—that is, it promoted active teacher learning, collective participation, and coherence—teachers increased their use of desired strategies in their science and mathematics classrooms. "Reform type" activities included teacher study groups; teacher collaboratives, networks, or committees; mentoring; internships; and resource centers.

How Teaching Matters: Bringing the Classroom Back into Discussions of Teacher Quality (Wenglinsky, 2000) points out that today's students do not have the benefit of waiting for the next generation of teachers to fill their schools. Instead, they are dependent on the effectiveness of those they now have. The report provides evidence of the link between particular types of teacher development and improved student learning in science and mathematics.

The National Education Goals Panel's report, *Bringing All Students to High Standards* (*NEGP Monthly*, 2000), also links professional development to improved student achievement. In particular, the panel recommended professional development that is sufficiently sustained and intense to help teachers become more effective at helping all students meet high academic standards.

Before It's Too Late (National Commission on Mathematics and Science Teaching for the 21st Century, 2000) concludes that better mathematics and science teaching depends on continuing professional development for all teachers. The report recommends the development of an ongoing system to improve the quality of mathematics teaching and the working

environment of teachers.

The Learning First Alliance's publication, *Every Child Reading: A Professional Development Guide* (2000), points out that for the teaching of literacy to succeed with almost all students, schools must use the most effective forms of professional development. The guide notes that student achievement in reading will improve when everyone who affects student learning is involved in professional development, when professional learning is given adequate time during the work day, and when professional development occurs through processes such as workshops, guided peer observation with feedback, teacher research groups, and demonstration lessons by master teachers, among other recommendations.

Teachers Who Learn, Kids Who Achieve: A Look at Schools with Model Professional Development, a report of WestEd (2000), identifies a number of shared characteristics among schools that distinguished themselves in the U.S. Department of Education's National Awards Program for Model Professional Development by demonstrating the link between staff development and student learning. These schools had clear student achievement goals, provided an array of professional development opportunities, embedded ongoing learning in the school culture, built a highly collaborative school environment, found and used time for teacher learning, and used a broad range of student performance data.

The U.S. Department of Education's report, *e-Learning: Putting a World-Class Education at the Fingertips of All Children* (2000), stresses the importance of technology-related teacher professional learning. The report advocates that states and school districts make professional development a priority to "increase the quantity, quality, and coherence of technology-focused activities aimed at the professional development of teachers" (p. 38).

Another report on technology, *The Power of the Internet for Learning: Moving from Promise to Practice* (Web-Based Education Commission, 2000), recommends the continuous and relevant training and support of teachers and administrators at all levels. "We heard that professional development—for preK-12 teachers, higher education faculty, and school administrators—is the critical ingredient for effective use of technology in the classroom," the report notes. "However, not enough is being done to assure that today's educators have the skills and knowledge needed for effective web-based teaching" (p. iv).

Trying to Stay Ahead of the Game: Superintendents and Principals Talk About School Leadership (Farkas, Johnson, Duffett, & Foleno, 2001) demonstrates the value school administrators attach to their own professional learning. Fifty-six percent of superintendents and 54 percent of principals viewed improved professional development as a "very effective" way of

improving school leadership. Administrators criticize current professional development efforts as impractical and focused on the wrong things and express support for professional learning focused on the latest research on student learning and effective educational practices.

DEVELOP HIGH-QUALITY PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

In this book, I argue that high-quality staff development driven by a compelling vision of student learning and a data-based assessment of current reality is essential if teachers are to consistently apply in their classrooms the findings of the most recent research on teaching and learning. This professional development, however, must be significantly different than it has been in the past if it is to produce high levels of learning for students and staff members. At its core, it will have a professional learning team whose members accept a collective responsibility for the academic achievement of all students represented by the teachers in the group and who meet regularly to learn, plan, and support one another in the process of continuous improvement. This professional development will not only affect the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of individual teachers, administrators, and other school employees, but will also alter the cultures and structures of the organizations in which those individuals work (Jones, 1998; Sparks & Hirsh, 1997).

As you will see in the chapters that follow, high-quality staff development:

- Focuses on deepening teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical skills;
- Includes opportunities for practice, research, and reflection;
- Is embedded in educators' work and takes place during the school day;
- Is sustained over time; and
- Is founded on a sense of collegiality and collaboration among teachers and between teachers and principals in solving important problems related to teaching and learning.

Such staff development moves beyond the transmission of knowledge and skills to include analytic and reflective cognitive processes, focuses on problems experienced by educators and reflects their input, and allows participants to share power and authority with those who teach them (Education Commission of the States, 2000).

Dramatically improved staff development will obviously not occur by accident. It will result from ambitious goals for both student and adult learning and deep changes throughout the system, which will be the subject of Chapter 2. As Michael Fullan argues (1991), "The greatest problem faced by school districts and schools is not resistance to innovation, but the fragmentation, overload, and incoherence resulting from the uncritical acceptance

of too many different innovations" (p. 197). Chapter 2 argues that a clearly-articulated and widely-held vision for student learning and educators' professional development based on stretch goals and deep change that is taken seriously by district and school leaders reduces the likelihood of such fragmentation, overload, and incoherence.

MY ASSUMPTIONS

- Quality teaching makes a difference in student learning.
- Teachers and principals can improve their practice through professional learning.
- The professional learning of teachers is a central factor in determining the quality of teaching.
- The professional learning of principals is a central factor in determining the quality of their instructional leadership.
- District structures and culture that surround the school play a critical role in determining the quality of professional learning experienced by teachers and principals.

FOR DISCUSSION

Write your assumptions regarding the areas addressed by my assumptions. Be specific and succinct. Dialogue with your group regarding your assumptions, remembering that the intention of dialogue is the nonjudgmental surfacing of assumptions rather than critiquing or seeking to change the assumptions of others.

Discuss your views regarding the assertion made earlier in this chapter: "Quality teaching in all classrooms and skillful leadership in all schools will not occur by accident, however. They require the design and implementation of the most powerful forms of professional development."

To gain a clearer sense of your "current reality," to what extent do you believe this statement accurately describes your school or district: "Unfortunately, the professional learning opportunities of most teachers are woefully inadequate to meet the demands of today's classrooms. And in most districts the quality of professional learning for principals and other schools leaders is even less adequate in assisting them to meet the almost overwhelming challenges of their work." Again, please be as specific as possible, citing evidence that supports your views.

Specify actions that will be taken as a result of this discussion, who will take them, and by what date.

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chapter two

STRETCH GOALS, DEEP CHANGE, AND A COMPELLING VISION

Deep change differs from incremental change in that it requires new ways of thinking and behaving. It is change that is major in scope, discontinuous with the past, and generally irreversible.

—Robert Quinn (1996, p. 3)

Low expectations for student achievement and poor quality professional development go hand in hand. Alternatively, high expectations for student learning require changes not only in instruction but significant alterations in leadership practices, curriculum, assessment, and various forms of support services for students. Such "deep changes" demand not only the acquisition of new knowledge and skills on the part of educators but "transformative learning" that affects their beliefs and assumptions about learning, teaching, and leadership. This chapter elaborates on the type of goals that are most effective in bringing about such changes in practice, beliefs, and organizational structures. In particular, this chapter will focus on the value of "stretch goals," deep change, and a compelling vision as both precursors and companions to new forms of professional development.

Stretch goals are an aspect of compelling vision that can be a powerful motivator for comprehensive change. Jack Welch, who retired in 2001 as CEO of General Electric, defines stretch goals as those that are beyond the organization's capacity when established. In his view, businesses must set such goals if they are to survive in today's highly competitive marketplace. While public education as we know it may or may not be in danger of going

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out of business, depending on the eye of the beholder, Welch's notion of stretch goals suggests the depth of change that may be required to create schools in which all students and staff members learn and perform at high levels—a stretch goal of the highest order.

Robert E. Quinn, author of *Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within* (1996), writes about the value of deep, comprehensive change. Incremental change, he argues, does not disrupt past patterns. "Deep change differs from incremental change in that it requires new ways of thinking and behaving," he writes. "It is change that is major in scope, discontinuous with the past, and generally irreversible" (p. 3).

Acknowledging that organizational and personal growth seldom follow a linear plan, Quinn (1996) argues that members of a group nonetheless yearn for a sense of direction, a vision of the future. "When we have a vision, it does not necessarily mean that we have a plan," he writes. "We may know where we want to be, but we will seldom know the actual steps we must take to get there. ... Deep change is an extensive learning process. ... Acting on a vision that exceeds our resources is a test of our vision, faith, and integrity" (p. 83-85).

Ambitious goals can unite staff members around them and motivate teachers and administrators to unprecedented professional learning and collaboration. Stretch goals may vary in their specificity from "giving students and staff members the best learning experience they've ever had" to "teaching all students to read at grade level by the end of 3rd grade." Whatever form they take, they provide an impetus and clear agenda for a school's professional learning.

A COMPELLING VISION

This book's vision, informed to a large degree by *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future* (National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, 1996) and *Learning to Lead, Leading to Learn* (Sparks & Hirsh, 2000), contains sufficient stretch to require deep change in most schools:

- All students learn and perform at high levels.
- All students have competent, caring teachers. This competence also extends beyond the classroom. According to Stephen Anderson, Carol Rolheiser, and Kim Gordon (1998), competence "... has shifted from individual teacher expertise toward professional community expertise—teachers jointly defining goals and taking responsibility for all students' progress, engaging in ongoing inquiry and experimentation, and assuming leadership in school development" (p. 59).

- Teachers are well prepared, provided with ongoing professional development, and receive appropriate support so they can be competent.
- Most staff development focuses on the content knowledge, instructional and classroom management practices, and human relations skills required of teachers who are competent and caring. This staff development will improve student learning because it is experiential, grounded in teachers' questions and inquiry, collaborative, linked to and derived from teachers' work with their students, connected to the study of subject matter and teaching methods, sustained and intensive (including coaching, modeling, and problem solving), and linked to other aspects of school change (Darling-Hammond, 1998).
- Principals who are instructional leaders keep schools focused on the core learning processes and organizational/structural changes required to produce high levels of learning and performance for all students and staff members. School leaders who are successful in moving schools to high levels of learning for students and staff members alike see themselves as "system designers," inventors of new processes and structures to improve student learning, and models of career-long learning. Principals who are designers understand that school structures and culture exert a powerful influence on learning and performance and help design a system that produces the desired result. These leaders of change efforts must also be role models, Quinn (1996) believes. "When evaluating a vision," Quinn writes, "people watch the behavior of their leaders and quickly recognize if a leader lacks personal discipline and commitment" (p. 125).

CURRENT REALITY

Current reality, unfortunately, differs in many important respects from the vision described above:

- Too many students do not learn at high levels, particularly those attending schools with high concentrations of low-income and/or minority students.
- Whether students have competent, caring teachers is hit or miss; some youngsters have the good fortune to have such teachers, others do not.
- Most staff development/school improvement activities do not improve the instructional leadership skills of principals nor focus on teachers' content knowledge, instructional skills, or other classroom-related knowledge and skills.
- For far too many teachers, staff development is demeaning and mind numbing as they passively "sit and get" the wisdom of "experts." It is often mandatory, driven by seat-time

requirements such as continuing education units, and evaluated by "happiness scales."

At a time when experts believe staff development is essential in school reform efforts that seek high levels of learning for all students, most staff development and school improvement activities continue to leave teachers' knowledge and skills essentially untouched. According to one report, well over half of U.S. teachers get less than a day's worth of staff development each year, in contrast with teachers in many other countries who benefit from 10 to 20 hours of professional development a week (McRobbie, 2000). Fifty-three percent of teachers in a national survey said they do not receive released time for professional learning, and 23 percent of respondents to the same survey reported they were given no support, time, or credit for professional development (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998).

Richard Elmore (1996), a Harvard University professor of education, argues that typical school reform does not affect the "core of educational practice": how teachers understand the nature of knowledge and the student's role in learning, how these ideas are manifested in teaching and classwork, student grouping practices, teachers' responsibilities for groups of students, processes for assessing student learning and communicating it to others, and the physical layout of classrooms.

Because staff development is part of a larger system that profoundly affects its effectiveness, school leaders must address structural issues as well as the professional learning of individual school employees. This means superintendents and principals must see themselves not only as leaders of learning communities and models of career-long learning, but as "system designers" and "school designers" who create structures and cultures that support high levels of student and adult learning.

In Chapter 3, we will consider in more detail what the work life of teachers and administrators would be like if current reality were transformed into the compelling vision described above.

MY ASSUMPTIONS

- High-quality professional learning for educators and ambitious goals for student learning go hand in hand.

- Deep changes in practice and school structures are necessary to achieve ambitious goals for student and adult learning.

- Most staff development and school improvement activities leave teachers' knowledge and skills essentially untouched.

FOR DISCUSSION

Write your assumptions regarding the areas addressed by my assumptions. Be specific and succinct. Dialogue with your group regarding your assumptions, remembering that the intention of dialogue is the nonjudgmental surfacing of assumptions rather than critiquing or seeking to change the assumptions of others.

What experiences have you had with stretch goals and deep change? What are advantages of stretch goals and deep change? What are the disadvantages?

What are your reactions to the "compelling vision" described in this chapter? With which parts do you agree, and with which do you disagree? Support your views with as much detail as possible.

To what extent does the "current reality" I describe match that of your school and district? What evidence do you have to support your claim?

Specify the actions that will be taken as a result of this discussion, who will take them, and by what date.

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chapter three

A COMPELLING VISION FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

When you begin to describe the organizational conditions under which professional development actually contributes to instructional capacity in schools, you begin to describe an organization as it rarely exists. Such an organization would only require teachers to learn new skills and knowledge if it were prepared to support their practice of these skills in real classrooms. ... It would be an organization that offered consistent messages to principals, teachers, and students about what goals are most important and what resources are available to support the work of meeting them.

—Richard Elmore (2002, p. 25)

It is no failure to fall short of realizing all that we might dream.
The failure is to fall short of dreaming all that we might realize.

—Dee Hock, VISA founder

Chapters 1 and 2 point out that quality professional learning is linked to quality teaching and skillful leadership and that ambitious goals and deep change are driving forces for the most powerful forms of professional development. But what exactly does quality professional development look like in practice and how does it affect the day-to-day activities of teachers and principals? This

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chapter provides answers to this question from three fictional teachers whose experiences combine professional development activities drawn from real-life examples and the literature of the field.

THREE VIGNETTES

New Vision High School

Just before leaving home for New Vision High School where he has been teaching for 12 years, Brian Harper downloads a rubric from another social studies teacher whom he met through a web site on which social studies teachers exchange lesson plans and other resources. Harper will share the rubric with his teammates this afternoon as they continue to discuss ways to help students become more clear about teachers' expectations for using original source documents in their reports.

When he arrives in the team office, Harper briefly discusses the lesson he'll teach during the day's first block with two teachers who will observe this class. While he once felt anxious about having other teachers in his classroom, over the past four years he has had the satisfying experience of being observed by peers and provided with high quality feedback that improved his teaching and students' learning. He has also had the benefit of watching many of his colleagues teach lessons they had planned together and engaging in extended discussions about ways to further strengthen the lessons.

Harper is relaxed about this morning's observation because he knows the focus will be on the lesson he and his colleagues planned together and the quality of student work produced as a result of the lesson. In small groups in this U.S. history class, students will discuss questions related to the oral histories of the Vietnam War era they are collecting from family and community members. Harper feels a renewed joy in his work as he helps students do the actual work of historians rather than just memorize names and dates.

As he makes his way to his first period class, Harper reflects on the significant changes in his school and in his professional life over the past four years. The appointment of Leslie Richardson as principal was a precursor to those changes. Richardson came to New Vision High School with a strong background in curriculum and instruction and an interest in how large schools could be structured to provide a more personalized learning environment for students and teachers. Her selection as principal coincided with growing community concern that students were not performing well on either state or national measures and that too

many students were feeling disconnected from their large high school.

These changes in his teaching practice, however, had not come easily to him and many of his colleagues. He recalls the uneasiness he felt when Richardson began making brief "walk throughs" of all classrooms and interviewing faculty members about why they became teachers and their hopes for themselves, their students, and the school. His discomfort continued when Richardson began forming small groups during faculty meetings to discuss articles about high schools that looked very different from New Vision and about teaching strategies that were unfamiliar to many teachers.

By the end of Richardson's first year, momentum for significant change began to build. The research on small high schools they had discussed at a faculty meeting struck a responsive cord with the faculty. As a result, that spring a team of 10 teachers and administrators visited a high school that had divided itself into "houses" of 200 students in which faculty members were advisors to students and students assumed greater responsibility for their own academic plans and progress. The visiting team was also intrigued by a state education agency-sponsored "restructuring schools" network to which the school belonged and the assistance and encouragement teachers received through their participation.

As a result of the visit, the faculty divided itself into study groups for the following school year. Each study group would examine in depth a topic such as block scheduling, advisor-advisee programs, the use of problem-based learning, and the adoption of a culminating senior project mentored by a teacher and community member. Each study group provided periodic updates at faculty meetings on what it was learning.

By Richardson's third year at New Vision, the faculty had voted to divide the school into houses, adopt modified block scheduling, and phased in an advisor-advisee system and senior project. Because study groups had stressed the importance of significant amounts of professional development to support these changes, the school offered five- or 10-day summer workshops on topics such as teaching in the block, organizing for problem-based learning, cooperative learning, and advising. Those workshops were offered that summer and during subsequent summers as well.

Recognizing that summer workshops alone were insufficient to support the significant changes in instruction required by the school's aspirations for its students, each teacher was assigned to two teams—a multi-disciplinary team of teachers who team teach courses and a subject-area team composed of teachers from across houses.

Harper's interdisciplinary team meets three times a week during the school day, and his

discipline-based team meets twice a week. Meeting length varies but is never less than 45 minutes. Discipline-based teams study the content taught by participants, providing Harper with an opportunity to delve more deeply into the curriculum standards that guide his lessons and to plan instruction that will enable all students to meet those standards. Meetings of the inter-disciplinary teams focus on planning lessons, examining student work to find ways that it can be strengthened, and discussing ways to help individual students meet the school's expectations for learning. Time for these meetings was found through the change to block scheduling and the initiation of an independent study block when community mentors supervise students as they work on projects.

As a teacher leader in these change efforts, Harper participated in a state education agency school-to-school network. Teams from each school attended a week-long residential summer institute where participants learned from experts and their peers. They considered methods to successfully teach students of various abilities, performance-based approaches to assess student learning, and processes for conducting action research to determine the effects of various changes on student learning. The most valuable part of these meetings, Harper thought, was the sharing of problems and solutions and informal discussions at meals and in the evenings. These school teams also met for three two-day meetings during the school year to support one another as they implemented these new practices.

At the end of the day, Harper is tired but proud of the changes in his teaching and the faculty's collective improvements. More than ever, he knows teaching is challenging intellectual work that requires not only skillful individual effort but a sense of interdependence with others to accomplish goals that none could achieve alone. He also knows these changes are making significant differences in the learning of his students and in the engagement students feel with their academic work and their connection with peers and teachers.

Paradise Valley Middle School

Although mathematics teacher Annette Jenson has been teaching for only four years, she feels like she already has been at the center of many important changes in her school. The first to affect her was a district-sponsored mentoring program that supported her in the classroom and in negotiating the many logistical details that often overwhelm new teachers. For her first two years of teaching, Betty Griffin, a veteran teacher who had been thoroughly trained in mentoring skills by the district office, met weekly with Jenson. The pair attending district-sponsored new teacher workshops together and afterwards discussed how

the topics related to Jenson's teaching.

During her first year at Paradise Valley Middle School, Jenson volunteered to attend the National Middle School Association's (NMSA) annual conference with eight teachers from her school. The excitement generated by the team's participation in the conference helped reinvigorate Paradise Valley's school improvement committee. While Jenson was not on the committee, she often ate lunch with some committee members and was intrigued by their conversations about the reform-oriented publications that were discussed at the committee's meetings.

Larry Dorsette, the school's principal, was a member of the team that attended the NMSA conference. He came away from it convinced the school could focus on the three pillars of successful middle schools discussed in several conference sessions: academic excellence for all students, developmentally-appropriate instruction, and equity. He and the teachers who attended the conference formed a monthly study group for the remaining five months of the school year as an adjunct to the Paradise Valley school improvement committee, sharing articles from NMSA publications, reading materials from the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Level Reform, and examining research.

The study group made two recommendations to the school improvement committee that were immediately acted upon and proved particularly important, Jenson recalls. The first was to ask the district office for resources to support significant changes within the school. As a result of Dorsette's meeting with Assistant Superintendent for Instruction Kay Blair, the district agreed to provide a skillful facilitator to guide the school improvement committee's work. Blair also agreed to provide standardized test score data disaggregated by race, socioeconomic status, and gender as well as student-specific achievement information so the school could better identify learning gaps. As Blair later acknowledged to the school faculty, none of these services existed at that time, but making them available seemed like the perfect embodiment of the district's often-expressed commitment to better serve its schools.

The second important recommendation was to invite an associate dean from the college of education of a nearby university to join the school improvement committee. That led the university to provide technical expertise in using technology in the classroom and in deepening teachers' knowledge of the content they teach, two priority areas identified by the committee.

Looking back at the changes over the past two years, Jenson can see the particularly

powerful impact of interdisciplinary teaching teams, a strategy selected to promote equity by ensuring that all students had access to high quality teaching. Team members assume collective responsibility for the learning of all students, plan lessons together, critique student work, and address the unique learning needs of individual students.

In addition to daily team meetings, Jenson also meets twice a week for an hour with other math teachers to deepen their knowledge of math and to discuss the best methods for teaching it. This group studied the findings of the Third International Math and Science Study (TIMSS) and watched TIMSS videotapes of teaching in other countries. They then analyzed the school's math standardized test data to identify math objectives with which students were having difficulty. From this data, they identified patterns, finding that students were having difficulty with problems that required multiple steps or included three-dimensional diagrams. Teachers then used the student achievement data to identify teachers whose students did well with those problems, asking them to describe their lessons. These processes eventually led to a curriculum revision, an examination of textbooks to determine where supplemental materials might be necessary, and tutoring sessions for students who needed extra help.

Celebrity Elementary School

From the perpective that only time can provide, Shirley Miller now sees how Celebrity Elementary School's five-year school improvement journey has profoundly affected her professional life as a 1st-grade teacher. In 1996, central office confronted Celebrity with data showing that the school had a long history of low performance in literacy. The faculty responded by denying the problem and blaming factors outside the school. However, teachers began to understand the problem better and to consider solutions the following year after a new principal was hired. That new principal, Larry Killion, listened patiently and respectfully to teachers' concerns while also insisting on high standards for teaching and student learning.

Killion found support for his efforts in the district's two-year-old leadership development program. Killion was assisted by a coach with whom he had weekly telephone conversations and periodic face-to-face visits that helped him clarify his goals and create action plans to achieve them. He also met monthly with other elementary principals to critique school improvement plans and learn important instructional leadership skills, such as data analysis and instructional coaching.

During Killion's first year, the faculty considered a number of remedies for its literacy problems, some of which, like Success for All, came packaged in an appealing format. Study groups analyzed each program, focusing on goals, research, and cost. Faculty also visited nearby schools that had adopted these programs and interviewed by telephone teachers and principals at more distant locations. In faculty meetings, which included parent representatives on the school improvement team, committees presented their findings. After careful analysis and discussion, the faculty decided to combine elements of programs that best fit the school's goals. As a result, many of the teachers became involved in content-based initiatives, such as the National Writing Project and the Great Books Program.

The school's commitment to a faculty-developed goal of all students reading on grade level by the end of 3rd grade led the school to organize itself so that everyone—including the principal and specialists—teaches reading for two hours each morning to a group of no more than 10 students. During the school's sustained silent reading period, teachers read professional literature and write in journals to reflect on their practice. This reflection is aided by regular formative assessments of student learning that teachers use to determine if their new approaches are improving student learning and to identify students who need additional assistance.

What most affected Shirley Miller's professional growth, though, was the district's reading improvement effort, which involves five days of training for all primary teachers and practical in-school assistance provided by the school's literacy lead teacher who models lessons, coaches veteran teachers, and trains and supports beginning teachers. Miller now voluntarily attends monthly districtwide grade-level meetings offered by the district language-arts coordinator. Teachers are encouraged to contribute their best lessons to an online database available to all district teachers. The database also includes samples of student work generated by the lessons and, in some instances, video clips of teachers conducting the lesson with students. In addition, the district provides released time to teachers who wish to visit classrooms of teachers whose lessons are in the database.

Miller recently enrolled in a master's degree program conducted by the district in partnership with a nearby university. Due to recent changes in the district's contract with its teacher union, salary increases will be awarded in part by teacher demonstrations of knowledge and skill and through improvements in student learning rather than receipt of a graduate degree. Miller's goal is to earn "master teacher" status in the district which will enable her to spend half of her time assisting teachers in her building.

CONCLUSION

The types of professional learning processes advocated in Part I and described in detail in this chapter require significant changes in the way school systems and schools operate. Part II of *Designing Powerful Professional Development for Teachers and Principals* considers school district responsibilities related to these changes and the establishment of communities of learning in schools.

MY ASSUMPTIONS

- Professional learning can occur in many ways that are often not thought of as professional development.

- The professional development processes described in this chapter are desirable and worth careful consideration.

- The professional development described in this chapter can be implemented in most K-12 schools.

FOR DISCUSSION

Write your assumptions regarding the areas addressed by my assumptions. Be specific and succinct. Dialogue with your group regarding your assumptions, remembering that the intention of dialogue is the nonjudgmental surfacing of assumptions rather than critiquing or seeking to change the assumptions of others.

Describe which aspects of these vignettes are most appealing to you and which are least appealing. List the most attractive elements of your individual and collective vision of powerful professional learning processes.

List the strengths in your school or district that would contribute to your vision becoming a reality. Discuss the barriers that impede its realization.

Who are the most important people in your school and/or district whose participation in discussion and/or decision making is necessary to make your vision a reality?

Specify what actions will be taken as a result of this discussion, who will take them, and by what date.

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PART II

PROVIDE A CONTEXT FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Chapter 4
Develop the System To Improve Learning

Chapter 5
School System Responsibilities

Chapter 6
A Goal for District Action:
All Schools as Professional Learning Communities

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DEVELOP THE SYSTEM TO IMPROVE LEARNING

Several years ago, I had a conversation with a man considered to be an outstanding principal. I asked, "What happened at the school where you were last principal? Are the reforms still in place?" "That has been a real disappointment to me," he lamented. "You see, conditions and programs at the school soon returned to the way they were before I got there." Over the intervening years, I've held several similar conversations. "Returning to normal" is the usual story. It's not surprising that schools do not maintain their improvements.

—Linda Lambert (1998, p. 17)

This, unfortunately, is a common story of school reform: A skillful, visionary leader helps an organization move to new levels of performance, typically with heavy doses of staff development, only to see the organization slide back to something close to its previous level of performance once the leader has moved on. Or, the infusion of foundation or government funds fuels a promising new program accompanied by significant amounts of staff development. When the money faucet is turned off, though, practice more or less reverts to its earlier form.

This chapter describes the responsibilities of school district leaders in designing a sustainable system that produces high levels of learning for all students and staff members. While the vision described in Part I may prove a starting point for system design, it must be elaborated upon locally in ways that fit the district context and engage the commitment of educators, parents, and the broader community. Just as there is no single "correct" model of

such a system or one right way to create it, a number of principles or ideas presented in this chapter may serve to guide this essential work.

THE POWER OF THE SYSTEM

If you put a good person in a bad system, the system wins every time, some observers claim. Of course, there are exceptions to that rule. While individuals whom we regard as professional heroes or heroines sometimes do rise above the circumstances in which they work, such exceptions do not constitute a high-performing system in which all students and teachers learn and perform at high levels.

Every system is designed to produce the results it gets. According to this view, schools produce the exact results they are organized to produce. School improvement efforts which operate from a "project mentality" that tries to isolate a system's parts for special attention while ignoring their connection to the system as a whole is an example of that view. For instance, changing elementary mathematics curriculum without simultaneously considering changes in instruction, assessment, and other parts of the system is likely to lead, at best, to a partial implementation of the new curriculum.

All too often, teachers' learning is subverted by larger, often invisible, forces in the schools and school systems that surround their classrooms. "The powerful forces that mitigate against authentic change or improvement in the schools combine to form a pervasive ethos that is systemic," Patricia Cloud Duttweiler writes (2000). "True reform that results in real change and improvement requires changing the organizational structure, the established procedures, the way decisions are made and resources allocated, and the relationships between central office personnel and school staff. ... Mandating standards and accountability is not going to have any greater chance of success than have any of our other reforms if the traditional educational structure and operating procedures are left intact" (p. 11).

An example: Teachers in a staff development program learn about mastery teaching, including its basic premise that virtually all students can master what is being taught if they have sufficient time and a number of alternative approaches to learning the material. Then those teachers return to schools in which there is subtle and sometimes not so subtle pressure to grade on a curve which presents a formidable barrier to the implementation of mastery learning.

Another example: District administrators tell a school's principal and teachers that test

scores must improve. They distribute curriculum guides and warn the school about the consequences of continued poor performance. But the personnel office continues to assign the least experienced and least qualified teachers to the school and the district's only source of readily-available professional learning continues to be "one-shot" sessions of little substance with no classroom follow-up.

In both cases, the system was working against itself—one part demanded improvement while another part failed to promote the change or even blocked its implementation. Educational leaders who seek to improve student learning and recognize the importance of continuous professional learning must pay attention to organizational change as well as the development of individual teachers and administrators. That means paying close attention to the system within which professional learning resides.

SYSTEMS THAT SUPPORT CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Systems theorists such as Peter Senge (1990) believe everything in a system is connected to everything else and that a change in any part affects all the other parts and the whole. "Systems thinking is a discipline for seeing wholes," he writes. "It is a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things" (p. 69). Senge stresses the importance of looking beyond personalities and events and seeing the structures in which employees operate so unseen forces that limit progress can be worked with and changed.

The interconnectedness of all parts of the educational enterprise means classrooms, schools, and the school district are tied together in a web of relationships where decisions and actions in any particular part affect other parts and the system as a whole. Put another way, the systems within which people work, including their cultural dimensions, exert a powerful influence on the performance of schools and individual teachers. And that influence affects both the quality of the professional learning that is provided and the likelihood that teachers and principals will use what they learn in their work to improve student learning.

Without this knowledge of systems, Senge (1990) points out, "The harder you push, the harder the system pushes back" (p. 58). He also notes, however, that small changes applied at the points of greatest leverage can produce big results, but that these points are often the least obvious because of our attention to symptoms rather than underlying causes. Leverage points for school improvement, Senge believes (Sparks, 2001), are the nurturing of innovative educators and parents and "... engaging teachers, principals, and parents in creating something new" (p. 43).

Phil Schlechty (2001) tells educators that "... systemic change requires them to think primarily in terms of social structures and culture. ... Systemic reform of an organization does not simply attempt to bring about temporary changes in the behavior of the individual men and women and boys and girls who live out a substantial part of their biographies in the organization; it focuses instead on changing the patterned regularities that characterize the organization and that shape behavior with the organization more generally" (p. 43).

Robert Fritz (1996) describes how organizational structures influence behavior. He says such structures can be oscillating or advancing. Oscillating structures cause the organization to have a sense of change but no real progress. "Oscillating behavior," Fritz writes, "is that which moves from one place to another, but then moves back toward its original position" (p. 6). (The classic example is someone who diets to lose weight, then returns to previous eating patterns because he is hungry or because he met the the weight loss goal, and thus once again gains weight.) Linda Lambert's example at the beginning of this chapter describes an oscillating structure in which a leadership change caused the school to snap back to its previous state, almost as if it were pulled back by a strong rubber band.

Problem solving, Fritz says (1996), cannot resolve an oscillating structure because the motivation to continue the problem-solving behavior diminishes as the tension caused by the problem is reduced and the problem returns. The only alternative, according to Fritz, is to design an advancing structure. An advancing structure contains three basic elements: a compelling vision, a thorough assessment of current reality, and powerful strategies to lead the organization to achieve its vision.

Noted business leader Max DePree (1989) supports the value of a thorough assessment of current reality. "The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality," he points out (p. 11). Many school leaders find the careful and continuous analysis of various forms of student data as an important source of evidence regarding current conditions, particularly when the school's faculty and other interested parties are involved.

Senge agrees with Fritz about the importance of a vision that leads to the creation of something new (Sparks, 2001): "When people come together to deal with practical problems, it's important for them to consider what they want to create. ... Most people in most organizations—and teachers are not exceptions to that—are obsessed with solving problems. ... When we're solving problems, we're trying to get rid of things we don't want. When we're creating, we are bringing things into reality that are valued by us. ... [V]itality comes when we move in the direction of what we truly want to bring into reality" (p. 45).

Fritz's thoughts on the role of vision within an advancing structure give guidance to schools seeking to improve the learning of all students through professional development. "Without vision," he writes (1996), "the organization is left to problem solve its way into an oscillating pattern. But vision cannot be produced by a reaction against what we do not want. It must be a product of what we do want" (p. 177).

Aspirations and values, Fritz believes (1996), should be the primary generative force around which we organize our lives and organizations. "When people share a common vision, they can perform feats that would otherwise be impossible ... There is something in the human spirit that longs for participation with others, that wants to be involved in a collective endeavor" (p. 202). In that situation, "... we not only tolerate change, we actively seek it," he says (p. 200).

Not all visions are equal in their ability to move people to positive action, Fritz points out (1996). He criticizes many vision statements for their fuzzy language and vagueness. "Authentic vision," he argues, "lives, breathes, and is tangible. The term implies something that we can see well enough to recognize it if it appeared in reality" (p. 184).

The importance of a compelling vision is also emphasized by Charles Schwahn and William Spady (1998). "Leadership and productive change begin with the creation of a compelling organizational purpose," they write. "But a compelling purpose alone will not result in *productive change*—change that makes a positive difference in student learning and in how schools operate. What's missing in most cases is a concrete, detailed vision statement that describes what the organization will look like when operating at its ideal best to accomplish its declared purpose. ..." (p. 45).

A vision is strengthened when it contains language that recognizes that schools serve purposes that some describe as moral. Michael Fullan (2001), for instance, believes that "teachers are moral change agents" (p. 16) and that schooling should make a difference in the lives of students in ways that matter. While teacher collaboration is worthwhile, Fullan argues it is likely to be weak unless participants are bound by moral commitments and shared responsibility. Such meaning, he claims, "... is fundamentally related to whether teachers are likely to find the considerable energy required to transform the status quo" (p. 48). In a similar vein, I wrote (Sparks, 1997), "It's been said that someone who has a 'why' can endure any 'how'; few things are more important to motivation than a purpose that is regarded as profound and morally compelling" (p. 2).

Paul Houston (2001) underscores the importance of moral purpose by likening superinten-

dents to ministers. "Ministers get their authority from on high," he writes. "When you work with other people's children and become responsible for them, that is very powerful moral authority. Moreover, ministers get their work done by means of persuasion and by creating common purpose. That is really the challenge of the superintendent of the future" (p. 433).

A major responsibility of the school system, then, is to create an advancing structure driven by a richly detailed, morally compelling vision of student learning, teaching, leadership, and professional development. This vision, in turn, reveals the policies, resources, and programs required to support it—for instance, district accountability, incentive systems, and collective bargaining agreements that support high performance, annual calendars and daily school schedules that are professional development friendly, and a culture focused on continuous improvement.

While a district's vision for its preferred future describes the outcomes and types of learning conditions it wishes to create in schools for both children and adults, that vision is realized only through disciplined actions taken over many years. Chapter 5 will address the responsibilities of district leaders in establishing these conditions. Chapter 6 will describe specific district actions required to establish professional learning communities and team-based learning in all schools, a prerequisite to the types of professional learning activities described in Part I.

MY ASSUMPTIONS

- System design has a significant effect on performance. The improvement of student learning, therefore, requires a system that is designed to initiate and sustain significant changes in teaching and leadership.

- Significant changes in any part of the system affect other parts of the system and the system as a whole.

- Small changes applied at points of high leverage can produce significant results.

FOR DISCUSSION

Write your assumptions regarding the areas addressed by my assumptions. Be specific and succinct. Dialogue with your group regarding your assumptions, remembering that the intention of dialogue is the nonjudgmental surfacing of assumptions rather than critiquing or seeking to change the assumptions of others.

Discuss personal and professional experiences with the oscillating structures described by Robert Fritz.

List the benefits and costs associated with creating ". . . an advancing structure driven by a richly detailed, morally compelling vision of student learning, teaching, leadership, and professional development."

Discuss to what extent district accountability and incentive systems, collective bargaining agreements, annual calendars, and daily school schedules help or hinder the continuous improvement of staff and student learning.

Specify what actions will be taken as a result of this discussion, who will take them, and by what date.

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SCHOOL SYSTEM RESPONSIBILITIES

Understand that your most important job is to create and manage systems that will enable principals and teachers to concentrate on the core business of schools, the creation of intellectual activity that students find engaging and from which they learn. ... You are a capacity builder. Act like one.

—Phil Schlechty (2001, p. 213)

If most schools and districts are not good learning organizations (or good professional learning communities if you like) this means they are not good employers. They are especially not good employers for teachers who want to make a difference.

—Michael Fullan (2001, p. 252)

As we saw in Chapter 4, systems exert a powerful influence over the professional learning and the day-to-day job performance of employees. A basic premise of this chapter is that leaders make a difference in systems through their actions or their neglect. The discussion that follows describes the types of broad district actions that align with powerful professional learning (described in Chapter 3) and the sustained improvements in leadership practices and the quality of teaching that occur in professional learning communities as will be discussed in Chapter 6.

The capacity of a school to serve as a strong learning community for staff and students

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alike, M. Bruce King and Fred Newmann (2000) say, "... is affected by policies and programs from the district, the state, and other organizations that deal with such issues as assignment of students to schools, standards for curriculum and assessment, teacher certification, hiring and promotion, professional development, and so on" (p. 577). Michael Fullan (2001) argues that the infrastructure of reform—the layer above whatever unit is targeted—is often weak or even working at cross purposes with the intended change, resulting in superficial teacher learning. Citing the widespread failure of schools to institutionalize reform, Fullan (2000) observes that "The main reason for the failure of these reforms to go to scale and to endure is that we have failed to understand that *both* local school development and the quality of the surrounding infrastructure are critical for lasting success" (p. 581).

While some districts have adopted a hands-off approach toward schools in the name of empowerment, such an approach ultimately thwarts sustained improvement efforts because district leaders must perform a number of critical tasks if *all* schools are to become thriving professional learning communities. For example, John Kotter (1995) notes common errors that interfere with organizational improvement efforts that reflect the importance of the many issues raised in this chapter: not establishing an intense enough sense of urgency, lacking a vision, under communicating the vision by a factor of 10, not removing obstacles to the new vision, and not systematically planning for and creating short-term wins.

THE DISTRICT'S ROLE

In general, the district office plays a critical role in providing the pressure and support necessary to initiate and sustain ambitious improvement efforts. School systems must clearly articulate standards for student learning, teaching, leadership, and staff development and then establish accountability and incentive systems related to those standards. They must create annual calendars that provide time for professional learning, establish induction programs for new teachers, and employ accomplished teachers to serve as mentors and coaches to their colleagues.

In addition, districts establish standards and monitor progress. They "build capacity" by developing leadership in schools and the district office, by providing resources to schools for professional learning and sometimes by being a provider of professional development, and by offering technical assistance to schools. District offices often have the capacity to analyze data, put it in useful forms for schools, and assist principals and teachers in using the data to set goals and assess progress. Districts can also offer incentives for improved performance and form partnerships with universities and businesses.

Richard Elmore (2000) offers five "design principles" for large-scale improvement in school systems:

- Maintaining a tight instructional focus sustained over time;
- Routinizing accountability for practice and performance in face-to-face relationships;
- Reducing isolation and opening up practice to direct observation, analysis, and criticism;
- Exercising differential treatment for schools based on performance and capacity, not on volunteerism; and
- Giving increased discretion to schools based on the quality of practice and results.

Judith Langer (2000) found that effective districts had coordinated efforts to improve student achievement, fostered teacher participation in a variety of formal and informal professional communities, structured improvement efforts in a way that offered teachers a strong sense of agency, engendered a caring attitude among colleagues and students, and fostered deep respect for lifelong learning. "Much call for educational reform has focused on changing the teacher," Langer concludes, "but this research suggests a need to change the setting..." (p. 435).

Fullan (2001) describes a study done by Elmore and Deanna Burney in New York City's District #2 that identified seven organizing principles regarding the district's role in promoting teacher and student learning. The study found that improvement focuses on instruction and is a long, multi-stage process, shared expertise drives instructional change, clear expectations and decentralized implementation are important, and good ideas are generated when talented people come together in an environment of collegiality and respect. Elmore (2000) believes superintendents play key roles in shaping district structures. He concludes that instructionally-effective school districts have superintendents who are knowledgeable about and key initiators of change in teaching and learning. These leaders were less reliant on bureaucratic controls to shape collective action, instead drawing on a culture of shared values. They used data on student performance to focus attention and create a sense of urgency and made heavy investments in highly-targeted professional development.

A particular form of assistance provided by many school systems is assisting teachers at the beginning of their careers and supporting veteran teachers who require additional assistance. The importance of induction programs and mentors for beginning teachers and the district's role in designing and sustaining these programs cannot be overstated. Beginning teachers too often find that their initial experience more closely resembles a hazing

ritual than a supportive introduction into a community of learners. In many situations, new teachers are given the most demanding assignments, handed class lists and keys to their classrooms, and left to sink or swim on their own. Not only does this situation lead to unacceptably high levels of teacher turnover, which is a critical problem in districts facing teacher shortages, it is inhumane in its consequences to both the teachers and students (many of whom require the very best teachers if they are to be successful in school).

Consequently, many school systems sponsor induction programs for beginning teachers that include mentoring, workshops, and other learning experiences that ease these educators into their new positions. Such programs provide valuable emotional support, assist teachers in using or developing classroom management skills, expand teachers' repertoire of methods for successfully engaging an increasingly diverse student population, and teach them how to use existing sources of information to better understand their students (Wasley, 1999).

Well-trained and supervised mentors assist in this effort through their example as much as by the advice they provide. "Beginning teachers rarely appreciate mentors who have *right* answers to every question and *best* solutions for every problem," James Rowley (1999) notes. "Good mentor teachers are transparent about their own search for *better* answers and *more effective* solutions. They model this commitment by their openness to learn from colleagues, including beginning teachers, and by their willingness to pursue professional growth through a variety of means" (p. 22).

In addition, a growing number of school districts provide peer review and assistance programs to provide support to peers who need additional help if they are to succeed. Additional information on induction and peer assistance programs can be found on NSDC's web site.

LEADING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Robert Slavin (2001) argues that district offices play a significant professional development role when they help schools select comprehensive reform models (coherent approaches to reform that provide direction for changes in instruction, curriculum, assessment, parent involvement, and school organization). He recommends that districts help schools choose the program that is right for them, support high quality implementation, begin by phasing in new models in a few enthusiastic schools, and make it clear that professional development is "Job One." Resource reallocation is a significant part of a system's reform efforts that affects professional development, Allan Odden and Sarah Archibald (2000) claim. They cite examples of districts dramatically expanding professional development by eliminating

most district-level categorical programs and instructional support staff positions and reallocating those resources to school-focused programs to improve literacy and mathematics.

Fullan (2001) underscores an important point regarding the leadership of staff development by quoting Elmore and Burney: "[I]n the district, professional development is a management strategy rather than a specialized administrative function. Professional development is what administrative leaders do when they are doing their jobs, not a specialized function that some people in the organization do and others do not. ... Anyone with line administrative responsibility in the organization has responsibility for professional development as a central part of his or her job description" (p. 175-176).

Fullan (2001) also argues that district practices affect the viability of learning communities within schools. "It is possible," he writes, "for an individual school to become highly collaborative despite the district it is in, but it is not likely that it will stay collaborative. If the district does not foster professional learning communities by design, it undermines them by default" (p. 165).

Karen Hawley Miles and Matthew Hornbeck (2000) point out that because districts seldom do a good job of integrating staff development at the district level, understanding their expenditures in this area can be a complicated task. In a study of staff development expenditures in four districts, they found considerable differences in spending across districts ($1,500 to $5,000 per teacher per year), that districts spent more than they thought they did on staff development, and that funding is fragmented, uncoordinated, and not focused on academic content. They recommend that districts align professional development resources with academic goals (especially literacy and math), focus on fewer topics, and reexamine the professional development activities of each major department to determine their link to the district's academic goals. They also recommend creating more accountability for the quality of professional development by requiring integrated school-based professional development plans and making their review a central part of the planning, budgeting, and evaluation processes.

Another aspect of resource allocation with systemic implications concerns district incentive systems that reward teachers for graduate degrees and years of experience. Drawing on the work of the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, Linda Darling-Hammond (Sparks, 1997) advocates that half of the dollars spent on salary credits for experience and education be redirected to financial benefits for demonstrated knowledge and skill (providing financial incentives for certification by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards is an example of one such approach).

THE IMPORTANCE OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING BY DISTRICT LEADERS

The Educational Testing Service lists six standards for superintendents that provide guidance for their learning (Holloway, 2001):

- Facilitating a shared vision of learning;
- Sustaining an instructional program conducive to student learning;
- Ensuring a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment;
- Collaborating with families and community;
- Acting with integrity, fairness, and ethics; and
- Understanding the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context of the district.

Because schools are first and foremost learning communities, superintendents should be deeply knowledgeable about child and adult development and learning, Holloway notes.

Schlechty (2001) believes school system leaders, particularly superintendents, must acquire certain skills, concepts, and understandings "... so their leadership initiates and sustains change-adept schools and school districts that will achieve uncommon results for all or nearly all students" (p. 187). Among those competencies Schlechty lists marketing the need for change, building a sense of community, forging compelling beliefs and communicating vision, organizing all district and school activity around the work of students, using assessment and managing results, fostering innovation and continuous improvement, fostering collaboration, and investing in professional development.

Regarding this last area, Schlechty (2001) stresses the importance of leaders "... taking stock of one's own skills and knowledge about leadership, and ensuring time is devoted to learning and for reflecting" (p. 199). In other words, superintendents must be models of continuous professional learning and district offices themselves must be learning communities which advance the knowledge and skills of school board members, administrators, and curriculum specialists. Schlechty advises superintendents to develop a few clear and easily understood messages about the beliefs that guide the school system and gather around them people who have credibility with those whose support is necessary to implement needed changes.

Richard DuFour (2000) argues that the development of school personnel must be a priority for superintendents. He contends that the most powerful forms of professional development are job-embedded and that a collaborative culture and collective inquiry in schools do not happen by chance. "Teacher isolation is so deeply ingrained in the traditional fabric of schools," he writes, "that leaders cannot simply invite teachers to create a collaborative culture. They must identify and implement specific, strategic interventions that help teach-

ers work together rather than alone" (p. 20).

DuFour (2000) recommends that superintendents who wish to be staff development leaders redesign the structure of schools so that every teacher is a member of a team, provide teachers with time to collaborate during the school day, insist that teacher collaboration generates products that focus on the critical questions of teaching and learning, monitor both individual and organizational growth, and provide the context for change and persist in pursuing it.

Peter Negroni (Senge et al., 2000) describes how he sought to transform the Springfield, Massachusetts schools into a "... district where learning is the centerpiece of all our work" (p. 430). "Our most critical role at the central office is to support learning about learning, especially among principals—who will then do the same among teachers in their schools," he observed (p. 431). A prominent tool Negroni used for that purpose was the "walk through," "... focused visits to classrooms, where I, and several other educators concentrate our attention not on what teachers are doing, but on how students are learning" (p. 430).

UNIONS AS ALLIES IN REFORM

Negroni recounts (Senge et al., 2000) that he came to see the teachers' union as an ally. "I often heard other superintendents complain about the 'damn unions,' " he wrote. "They ask each other: 'What is it in teachers' contracts that keeps us from educating the kids?' A better question is: What relationship do we aspire to build with the organization that represents the workers here?" (p. 429).

As a partial answer to that question, Julia Koppich (Sparks, 2000) recommends that districts and unions develop slim district-level contracts that includes items such as measurable student achievement goals, a school-year calendar, a system of peer review for teacher practice, and a quality review process for low-performing schools. Other matters such as professional development and how the school is organized for teaching and learning would be decided at the school level. Koppich cites school systems in which labor contracts emphasize performance-oriented areas such as quality professional development, peer assistance and review, and new forms of compensation based on knowledge and skill rather than experience and graduate degrees.

Schlechty (2001) asks union leaders to distinguish between using power to stop bad things such as arbitrary dismissals and using power to make good things happen. "In many schools districts, union leadership is the most stable leadership in the district," he writes. "Make this

count by leading schools into the 21st century rather than binding them to contract models that were successful in stopping bad things from happening 50 years ago" (p. 212).

Closely linked to collective bargaining agreements are school systems' evaluation processes for teachers, which Charlotte Danielson and Thomas McGreal (2000) view as significant means for improving professional expertise within a culture of professional learning. "By requiring self-assessment, working in teams on a focus area, and reflecting on one's practice through portfolio exercises, an evaluation system can promote professional learning in teachers," they write (p. 30). The same could be said of growth-promoting evaluation processes for principals and other administrators.

Because the goal of the districtwide work described in this chapter is to promote higher levels of student and staff learning within schools, Chapter 6 will consider in detail the characteristics of professional communities that initiate and sustain such learning.

MY ASSUMPTIONS

- Through their actions or their neglect, school district leaders make a significant difference in the quality of school leadership and teaching.

- District leaders play a critical role in providing both the pressure and support necessary to initiate and sustain ambitious improvement efforts.

- Leaders provide important models of professional growth when they participate in professional learning communities.

- Superintendents' acquisition of deep knowledge about child and adult development and learning is important to successful districtwide reform efforts.

- Union leaders are important allies in creating the kinds of professional development described in this book.

FOR DISCUSSION

Write your assumptions regarding the areas addressed by my assumptions. Be specific and succinct. Dialogue with your group regarding your assumptions, remembering that the intention of dialogue is the nonjudgmental surfacing of assumptions rather than critiquing or seeking to change the assumptions of others.

Describe how your school or district provides both pressure and support regarding high levels of learning for all students. Provide specific examples of both.

Describe the extent to which your school or district has a comprehensive, coordinated effort to improve the learning of all students. Discuss your views on whether the elements of that plan are sufficiently powerful to improve the learning of all students.

Describe the extent to which your school or district has created and managed systems that "... enable principals and teachers to concentrate on the core business of schools, the creation of intellectual activity that students find engaging and from which they learn."

Specify what actions will be taken as a result of this discussion, who will take them, and by what date.

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A GOAL FOR DISTRICT ACTION: ALL SCHOOLS AS PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

A professional field, as opposed to a technical one, is one that prizes constant dissatisfaction with current clients as the core to better service to clients in the future. Research has found that faculty in successful schools always questions existing instructional practice and do not blame lack of student achievement on external causes. Faculty in schools that have high intellectual standards and educate virtually all their students well work in collegial, critical ways with each other, clearly knowing what they want of all students and striving to close the gap between the rhetoric of education aims and the hard, professional work of practice.

— Carl Glickman (2002, pp. 5-6)

Leaders must create conditions that value learning as both an individual and collective good. Leaders must create environments in which individuals expect to have their personal ideas and practices subjected to the scrutiny of their colleagues, and in which groups expect to have their shared conceptions of practice subjected to the scrutiny of individuals.

—Richard Elmore & Deanna Burney (1999, p. 20)

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chapter six

As we've seen in Chapters 4 and 5, school system leaders are responsible for establishing organizational structures and a culture within which professional learning and continuous improvement of student achievement thrive. No one else can make these essential changes. It is easy, however, for district leaders to become so engaged in these changes that they lose sight of their purpose—to create sustained professional learning and collaboration in schools for the benefit of all students. The term that best captures that aspiration is "professional learning community."

While this chapter provides a rationale for such communities, it resists the temptation to prescribe how district and school leaders form and sustain them. Such prescriptions seldom produce the desired result and often undermine educators' belief in their own capacity to create such schools and their desire to do so, a subject that will be addressed at some length in Part V of this book.

A RATIONALE FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

"Professional learning communities" or "communities of practice" are the terms often given to schools in which staff members provide meaningful and sustained assistance to one another to improve teaching and student learning. Embedded within school learning communities are teams that meet regularly and provide technical and social support. These teams, typically consisting of four to eight members, may be composed of individuals from the same grade level or department or bring together individuals from across the school. Without the support such communities provide, the challenges of overcoming the inertia of the status quo and persisting in making complex changes in practice can seem insurmountable. Unfortunately, most schools and district offices remain hierarchical organizations, not communities. Too often, they use command-and-control strategies to enforce compliance rather than community-building approaches to generate energy and sustain long-term commitment.

Scott Peck (1987) characterizes "true community" as "... a group of individuals who have learned how to communicate honestly with each other, whose relationships go deeper than their masks of composure, and who have developed some significant commitment to 'rejoice together, mourn together,' and to 'delight in each other, make others' conditions our own' " (p. 59). He says such communities are inclusive, realistic, and contemplative; are safe places in which individuals can be vulnerable and fight gracefully; and have decentralized authority in which everyone is a leader.

Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1996) recommends that principals lead efforts to make high schools into learning communities for all teachers and that these schools provide adequate time, money, and other resources to ensure ongoing professional development. In addition, the report asks principals to model for others by pursuing their own professional growth while helping lead the professional development efforts of their schools.

The Education Commission of the States (2000) notes that "there is general consensus that the organizational culture of the school is an important factor in determining whether teachers participate in professional development and what impact that participation has. School cultures that encourage collegiality, reflection, risk taking, and collaborative problem solving facilitate effective professional development. In these schools, there is a collective focus on students and a shared responsibility for student learning" (p. 18).

Tony Wagner (2001) concurs. "Both students and teachers learn more and do more," he argues, "when they feel a part of something important that is larger than themselves and that they have helped to create. ... The spirit of a good learning community is one of shared responsibility and collaborative inquiry for both adults and students" (p. 383).

Wagner's views are supported by the National Research Center on English Learning & Achievement (2002), which claims successful professional development assists teachers in being reflective in their practice within professional communities "... in which teachers rely on collective expertise and mutual support of colleagues to inform their day-to-day judgments" (p. 1).

Senge (1990) used the term "learning organization" to describe organizations most likely to succeed in a contemporary environment by applying five "disciplines": systems thinking (as described in Chapter 4), personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, and team learning. More specifically, Shirley Hord (Hord, in press) and her colleagues at the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory conclude that professional learning communities display distributed leadership, a shared vision, collective learning, supportive conditions, and shared practice.

Schools that have received the U.S. Department of Education's Model Professional Development Award demonstrate these attributes (WestEd, 2000). These schools use clear, agreed-upon student achievement goals to focus and shape teacher learning, provide an expanded array of professional development opportunities, and embed ongoing, informal learning in the school culture. In addition, they build a highly collaborative school environ-

ment in which working together to solve problems and to learn from each other is a cultural norm, use a broad range of student performance data to assess progress, and find time for teacher learning.

The importance of a collective focus on students and a shared responsibility for their learning was identified in a study by Roger Goddard, Wayne Hoy, and Anita Woolfolk Hoy (2000). They found that "collective teacher efficacy, the perceptions of teachers in a school that the efforts of the faculty as a whole will have a positive effect on students" (p. 480) "... have a strong influence over teacher behavior and, consequently, student achievement" (p. 497). Student achievement can be improved, the researchers argue, by leadership efforts that raise the collective efficacy beliefs of teachers. "When teachers believe they are members of a faculty that is both competent and able to overcome the detrimental effects of the environment, the students in their building have higher achievement scores than students in buildings with lower levels of collective teacher efficacy" (p. 503).

Likewise, in a study of 820 secondary schools, Valerie Lee, Julia Smith, and Robert Croninger (1995) determined that in schools characterized as learning communities staff members did indeed hold collective responsibility for the learning of students, worked together, and changed their teaching. As a result, students had greater academic gains in science, math, history, and reading than those in traditionally-organized schools. According to the researchers, teachers in these schools also reported more satisfaction in their work, had higher morale, and were absent less often.

"Team learning is vital," Senge (1990) writes, " because teams, not individuals, are the fundamental learning unit in modern organizations. This is where 'the rubber meets the road'; unless teams can learn, the organization cannot learn. ... When teams are truly learning, not only are they producing extraordinary results, but the individual members are growing more rapidly than could have occurred otherwise" (p. 10). While many schools, especially middle schools, have set aside regular time for team meetings, this time is often used for purposes other than professional learning and collaborative work.

As the WestEd study (2000) mentioned above notes, learning communities require generous amounts of time for adult learning and collaboration during the school day. To cite but one example, the Sherman Oaks Community Charter School in California provides teachers with 90 minutes a day for planning, collaboration, and study (Curtis, 2000).

Periodically scheduled inservice days are insufficient; time for teacher learning and collaboration must be built into teachers' daily schedules. Carolann Wade (2001) notes that

U.S. teachers have about an hour each week for such activities compared to teachers in some other industrialized nations who have 10 to 20 hours per week. (The spring 1999 issue of the *Journal of Staff Development* and NSDC's web site provide numerous examples of how schools provide more time for teacher learning.)

While some education leaders argue that teachers must be responsible for finding their own profession learning time, others see it as a systemic and cultural issue. "How educators think about time, and how they use it, is woven into the cultures of their schools," Kent Peterson (1999) writes. "School leaders must learn how to read a school's culture, and how to focus staff development on the cultural issues that affect how people use their time. Thus they can spend their time building a culture that uses time well" (p. 17).

Although time for professional learning is certainly an important issue, successful professional learning communities have found numerous ways to do collaborative work. Virtually all schools can find several hours a month for professional development by using one or more of the methods described in the resources mentioned above—adding days in the annual calendar, providing early-release days, hiring substitute teachers to enable peer visitations and small group meetings, and using faculty, grade-level, team, and department meetings to promote professional learning, among many other strategies.

BARRIERS

While the major barriers to sustained professional community and adult learning will be discussed more fully in Part V, a substantial barrier worthy of note in this chapter is the lack of trust among educators and poor quality relationships that exist in many schools, particularly those most challenged by poverty and other social problems. Consequently, it is critical that leaders of learning communities make the establishment of high quality relationships and trust a high priority.

"In our worst schools," researchers Charles Payne and Miriame Kaba (2001) found, "the basic web of social relationships is likely to be severely damaged. Such schools can be angry, discouraged places, where people trust only those in the personal clique..." (p. 4). In a point relevant to professional development, the authors conclude: "Pervasive distrust means that schools cannot make use of financial and technical resources even when they become available" (p. 6). Payne and Kaba report that the quality of relationships in high-poverty schools correlates highly with the improved academic performance of students. More specifically, their research found that "... it may well be that social trust is the key factor asso-

ciated with improving schools" (p. 4).

Strong educational leaders, Wagner (2001) claims, view the creation of a respectful environment as nonnegotiable and make it everyone's responsibility. "Once a safer, more respectful environment has been established in a school," he writes, "leaders can create teacher teams, suggest meaningful tasks or topics for them to pursue, and set up regular weekly time for discussions. Just as teachers learn social skills, or 'emotional intelligence,' through group work, so, too, do teachers learn how to work more collaboratively through regular problem-solving discussions in small groups. Gradually, the sense of isolation and preference for autonomy give way to pride in the accomplishments of a team—in making more of a difference for students. Over time, teacher groups progress from discussions of curriculum and student work to visiting one another's classes and, finally, to offering critiques of teaching" (p. 382).

This concludes Part II of *Designing Powerful Professional Development for Teachers and Principals*. Part III will examine the instructional leadership responsibilities of principals and teacher leaders and provide guidance for creating leadership development programs that ensure skillful leadership in all schools and quality teaching in all classrooms.

MY ASSUMPTIONS

- The technical and social support provided by professional learning communities and teams are essential in overcoming the inertia of the status quo and persisting in making complex changes in leadership and teaching.

- Successful professional learning communities have at their base high-quality relationships, collegiality, reflection, risk taking, and collaborative problem solving.

- A collective focus on the learning of all students and a shared responsibility for student learning are essential hallmarks of effective professional learning communities.

- Virtually all schools can find several hours a month for professional learning by using one or more of the methods described in the resources mentioned in this chapter.

FOR DISCUSSION

Write your assumptions regarding the areas addressed by my assumptions. Be specific and succinct. Dialogue with your group regarding your assumptions, remembering that the intention of dialogue is the nonjudgmental surfacing of assumptions rather than critiquing or seeking to change the assumptions of others.

Describe the extent to which your district office staff or school may be regarded as a professional learning community.

Describe actions taken by the school district that enable schools to be professional learning communities. List district actions that would strengthen such communities in schools. If your frame of reference is a school, list the school actions that would strengthen it as a professional learning community.

Describe your views on the value of team-based learning for all teachers within a school. What are its advantages and disadvantages? Discuss the impediments that must be overcome if such an approach were to be used and the actions that might be taken to initiate team-based learning in your district or school.

Specify what actions will be taken as a result of this discussion, who will take them, and by what date.

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PART III

DEVELOP SCHOOL LEADERS

Chapter 7
School Leadership

Chapter 8
The Development of Principals and Teacher Leaders

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SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

We want to enable people to lead change, but you can't lead change unless you've got a profound sense of appreciation and respect for learning. And you need to have something to aspire to that's bigger and more compelling than what you've got.

—Rayona Sharpnack (Dahle, 2000, p. 278)

"The principal is the key person in determining whether a school succeeds." "Good principals are focused on instruction and student learning." "It's harder and harder to find good principals to replace those who are retiring." "Our best teachers don't aspire to be principals. We think that's because the job is getting more difficult to do each year."

Comments such as these have filled educational publications for the past few years and can be overheard in the hallways wherever school leaders gather. At the same time, we hear: "The job of the principal is too big for one person. No one can be expected to do all those things." "Teachers have leadership talents we don't tap." "It's important to find ways that teachers' leadership abilities can be used without them leaving the classrooms to become administrators."

The "vision" described in Part I—high levels of learning for all students, all students with competent teachers, all teachers receiving the powerful new forms of professional development they require to be effective with an increasingly diverse student body—requires principals who are consensus builders, strong instructional leaders, and skillful in

forming and sustaining the professional learning communities as described in Part II. It also requires that principals distribute leadership among teachers who then perform key roles in the school improvement process.

This chapter explores new conceptualizations of the principal's role. It also considers the role of teacher leadership in creating high-performing schools. Chapter 8 will discuss the type of professional learning that is essential if principals are to fulfill their new responsibilities and if teachers are to play various critical leadership roles in their schools and in district offices.

NEW CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF THE PRINCIPAL'S ROLE

While there seems to be universal agreement on the importance of the principal, school systems report that they are finding it difficult to attract qualified candidates to the vacancies created by retiring "boomer" administrators. And because few districts have "aspiring principal" programs to identify and begin developing prospective leaders, more and more districts find themselves between the proverbial rock and a hard place—while skillful principals are essential in the reform efforts they are harder than ever to come by.

Concurrently, as we will see below, expectations for principals continue to increase. Principals are expected today to create learning communities in their schools and to engage the broader school community in creating and achieving a compelling vision for its schools, which typically serve increasingly diverse student populations. They are asked to give up "command-and-control" views of leadership and to be instructional leaders steeped in curriculum, instruction, and assessment who can coach, teach, develop, and distribute leadership to those in their charge.

Roland Barth (2001) offers a simple definition of leadership: "Making happen what you believe in" (p. 446). But more complex conceptions of leadership are also taking hold. For instance, the Task Force on the Principalship of the School Leadership for the 21st Century Initiative (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000) based its work on this premise: "[P]rincipals today also must serve as *leaders for student learning*. They must know academic content and pedagogical techniques. They must work with teachers to strengthen skills. They must collect, analyze, and use data in ways that fuel excellence" (p. 2).

Implementing such an ambitious set of tasks takes its toll on principals, however. "Creating a learning community requires planned pursuit, yet principals can be easily consumed by everyday 'urgent but unimportant' matters," Milli Pierce observes (2000).

"Their quandary is whether to learn to carve out time to supervise and coach teachers and work with them on professional development plans that support real school improvement, or to risk leading a disaffected, low-performing school community" (p. 1). In addition, principals' responsibility for improvement is typically not matched by authority in critical areas such as personnel and budgets (Johnston, 2000). As a result, principals experience intense job stress, excessive time requirements, difficulty in satisfying parents and community members, and social problems that make it difficult to focus on instructional leadership, *Leadership for Student Learning: Reinventing the Principalship* (IEL, 2000) reports.

As we saw in Part II, rising expectations for principals require that school systems modify their policies and practice to support principals as instructional leaders. Christopher Cross and Robert Rice (2000) concur. "Enabling principals to put instructional leadership first," they write, "requires a realignment in school districts of the practices, responsibilities, and duties assigned to principals, and will entail delegating many of the nonacademic tasks to assistant principals or other staff members" (p. 62). Indeed, some school systems are experimenting with dividing the duties of principals into two positions, one which addresses the instructional leadership of teachers while the other focuses on non-instructional tasks such as food services and building maintenance.

PRINCIPALS AS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS

The National Association for Elementary School Principals' (2001) report, *Leading Learning Communities: Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able to Do*, advocates that principals provide time for teacher reflection on their own practice; invest in teacher learning; connect professional development to school learning goals; provide opportunities for teachers to work, plan, and think together; and recognize the need to continually improve their own professional practice.

Richard Elmore (2000) offers a definition of school leadership comparable to Roland Barth's in its brevity: "Leadership is the guidance and direction of instructional improvement" (p. 13). One of the most important instructionally-focused areas for school leaders, according to Elmore (2000), is helping others acquire new values and behaviors. Sounding a bit like Linda Lambert in Chapter 8, Elmore writes: "People make these fundamental transitions, by having *many* opportunities to be exposed to the ideas, to argue them into their own normative belief systems, to practice the behaviors that go with these values, to

observe others practicing those behaviors, and, most importantly, to be successful at practicing in the presence of others ... " (p. 31).

Elmore (2000) emphasizes the importance of a coherent set of school goals "... that give direction and meaning to learning and collegiality" (p. 16) and notes that collegial interaction has little value "... except in a school where the principal and teachers explicitly created a normative environment around a specific approach to instruction" (p. 17).

According to Andreae Downs (2000), if all teachers are to perform at high levels, principals must serve teachers and students as instructional leaders who keep school activities focused on student learning and build learning communities among staff members (and sometimes parents and community members as well). Just as they believe in the capacity of all students to learn at high levels, so, too, do instructional leaders believe they can learn to be more effective. These principals regularly visit classrooms, meet with teachers in large and small groups to discuss teaching and learning, discuss student work with teachers, alter the daily schedule to provide time for teacher learning, and use faculty meetings for professional development. They also shape school norms to promote an ongoing discussion of teaching and learning and to encourage reflection in the use of new practices.

Phil Schlechty (2001) advises principals to see themselves as part of a district-level team as well as head of a school team. He also asks them to focus the school on creating quality work for students and to remove barriers that inhibit that focus. "You are as responsible for what teachers do in the classroom as are the teachers themselves," he reminds principals. "Good leaders do not exist outside the context of good followers, and good followers do not exist unless they have the potential to be good leaders. Developing that potential is what good leadership is all about" (p. 214).

In a study of elementary school leadership in Chicago, Penny Sebring and Anthony Bryk (2000) found three common elements among the principals of productive schools: leadership style, their strategies, and the issues on which they focus. Principals had a leadership style that was inclusive and facilitative, focused the institution on student learning, provided efficient management, and combined pressure with support. The strategies used by these principals included making "quick hits" (attacking a highly visible problem and solving it quickly); having a long-term focus on the instructional core; having a strategic orientation through a comprehensive, coherent plan for school development; and by attacking incoherence. Key issues addressed by these principals were the strengthening of parent/community ties to the school, developing teachers' knowledge and skills, and promoting a

school-based professional community.

Lew Smith (2001) tells of a Fordham University study of schools that make significant improvements. The researchers noted that these schools had newly-assigned experienced principals who provided strong leadership that helped create internal dissonance combined with outside pressure. These leaders also initiated internal and external collaborative relationships, had a commitment to school-based professional development with a sharp focus on how well students were learning, and shifted from top-down management to teachers' making decisions about curriculum and teaching methods. Smith closes his essay with the question, "Can we muster the will to make change happen?" (p. 33), a subject I will address in Part V.

Tom Guskey (2000) argues that principals must help teachers make better use of assessment data, particularly that data that is produced in their own classrooms. He says that principals should emphasize the use of classroom assessments as learning tools that are part of the instructional process, regularly review classroom assessment results with teachers to identify potential instructional problems, and provide opportunities for teachers to plan collaboratively, examine their students' assessment results and work samples to identify areas of difficulty, and develop shared strategies for improvement.

Likewise, Richard Stiggins (2001) believes principals must cultivate "assessment literacy" within their schools by being assessment literate themselves and ensuring that classroom assessments serve instructional purposes. "Leadership is needed," he writes, "to create an instructional environment that expects and supports competence in assessment, as well as the effective application of that competence in the service of students' academic well being" (p. 25).

Principals also play an essential role in establishing a school culture that promotes quality teaching, according to Sandra Harris (2000). She found that teachers value empowering behaviors such as treating teachers professionally and involving teachers in decision making; supporting behaviors such as providing emotional and moral support and being visible during the school day; and communicating behaviors such as active listening, providing encouragement, and establishing clear expectations.

"The bottom line is that the leader is the primary culture carrier for the organization," Carol Schweitzer (2000) concludes. "If the leader's attitudes and behaviors do not match the culture that you are intending to build, it will not work. The leader and the culture must be in sync" (p. 35).

Dave Wheat, James Cramer, and Mary Kay Cramer (2000) offer yet another important task for principals: supporting teachers who are seeking National Board of Professional Teaching Standards certification. Principals can assist these teachers, the authors point out, by monitoring candidate's progress, celebrating the completion of small steps along the way, providing released time for candidates to prepare portfolios, and critiquing videotaped lessons.

TEACHER LEADERSHIP

A common view of leadership is that leaders are strong, often charismatic individuals. They alone persuade others through their forceful personalities or induce compliance through fear. They know what needs to be done and they transform their workplaces into high performance organizations by the force of their will. Peter Senge (1999) argues, however, that leadership for deep change requires replacing the myth of the "hero leader" with the concept of leadership communities. These communities, he believes, enable the building of leadership capacity throughout the organization so the organization can continually adapt and reinvent itself.

If schools are to be places in which students and educators are successful in their respective roles, teachers must be at the core of the leadership communities that Senge envisions. Teacher leadership can take many forms. It may include advocating the vision for staff development described in this book as part of collective bargaining, participating on school and district improvement teams to help determine goals and strategies, conducting classroom and schoolwide action research to determine if changes are improving the learning of all students, mentoring new teachers, serving on peer review panels to provide support and assistance to new and veteran teachers, and working on special assignment as coaches or instructional guides to provide ongoing professional learning for their peers.

Fullan (2001) explains the value of teacher leadership this way: "The teacher in a collaborative culture who contributes to the success of peers is a leader; the mentor, the grade-level coordinator, the department head, the local union representative are all leaders if they are working in a professional learning community" (p. 266).

Teacher leadership provides clear benefits to schools and to the individuals who assume those responsibilities. But significant barriers to the fulfillment of these roles exact an emotional and physical toll on teacher leaders. Many of these barriers can be traced to antiquated mental models—"deeply ingrained generalizations, and even images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action" (Senge, 1990, p. 8). For example, the common

and tacit view that teaching is semi-skilled labor with an emphasis on nurturing undermines both the need for intellectually rigorous staff development and the value of teacher leadership in the school improvement process. The assumptions that teachers' responsibilities should be limited to the classroom with students, that teachers should work alone, and that all teachers should be viewed as equal in their knowledge and skills are other significant barriers. More will be said about barriers to teacher leadership in Chapter 8.

DISTRIBUTING LEADERSHIP IN SCHOOLS

Mary Neuman and Warren Simmons (2000) observe that, "In the most effective schools that we have worked with, every member of the education community has the responsibility—and the authority—to take appropriate leadership roles. ... The definition of 'leader' has been broadened to encompass teachers, staff members, parents, and members of the entire education community" (pp. 9-10).

Elmore (2000) lists five principles of distributed leadership in schools: (1) the purpose of leadership is the improvement of instructional practice and performance, regardless of role, (2) instructional improvement requires continuous learning, (3) learning requires modeling, (4) the roles and activities of leadership flow from the expertise required for learning and improvement, not from the formal dictates of the institution, and (5) the exercise of authority requires reciprocity of accountability and capacity.

Jonathan Supovitz (2000) describes three specific forms of distributed leadership: the preparation of teacher specialists within schools who act as advocates for new forms of teaching and serve as coaches to their peers, the devolution of authority to teams of teachers who are responsible for making instructionally-related decisions and whose leaders serve on school councils, and the employment of full-time design coaches and literacy or math coordinators within comprehensive school reform designs.

Neuman and Simmons (2000) offer other ways in which teachers provide leadership within schools. "Other structures that enhance shared leadership and responsibility," they note, "include networks of teachers who gather regularly to share their own or their students' work, study groups that focus on learning about and understanding particular issues, action research that provides both continuous feedback to practitioners and summative data about performance, and 'critical friends' who can offer needed but often difficult observations on the work of a school" (p. 12).

Ann Lieberman (Sparks, 1999) points out that leadership roles enable teachers to move

out of the isolation even good teachers feel in their classrooms. "It's extremely liberating," she says, "for teacher leaders to go to places where people are talking about learning and the issues of the day" (p. 56). Roland Barth (2001) agrees: "These teachers win something important. They experience a reduction in isolation; the personal and professional satisfaction that comes from improving their schools; a sense of instrumentality, investment, and membership in the school community; and new learning about schools, about the process of change, and about themselves. And all of these positive experiences spill over into their classroom teaching. These teachers become owners and investors in the school, rather than mere tenants. They become professionals" (p. 449).

MY ASSUMPTIONS

- Principals play an essential role in creating schools that promote quality teaching in all classrooms and high levels of student learning.
- Effective schools distribute leadership responsibilities among many individuals.
- Teacher leaders benefit as they serve the school, its faculty, and its students.

FOR DISCUSSION

Write your assumptions regarding the areas addressed by my assumptions. Be specific and succinct. Dialogue with your group regarding your assumptions, remembering that the intention of dialogue is the nonjudgmental surfacing of assumptions rather than critiquing or seeking to change the assumptions of others.

Discuss your views regarding Roland Barth's definition of leadership: "Making happen what you believe in."

Describe how your district supports or does not support principals as strong instructional leaders in their schools.

Discuss school or district policies and practices that enable teacher leadership in your district or school.

Specify what actions will be taken as a result of this discussion, who will take them, and by what date.

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chapter eight

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRINCIPALS AND TEACHER LEADERS

Leaders live with the very expectations they have for others, being open and willing to be scrutinized as to how well they carry on their own professional work.

—Carl Glickman (2002, p. 95)

[L]eadership is about learning together, and constructing meaning and knowledge collectively and collaboratively. It involves opportunities to surface and mediate perceptions, values, beliefs, information, and assumptions through continuing conversations; to inquire about and generate ideas together, to seek to reflect upon and make sense of work in the light of shared beliefs and new information; and to create actions that grow out of these new understandings. Such is the core of leadership.

—Linda Lambert (1998, pp. 5-6)

Skillful leadership on the part of principals and teachers is essential if schools are to become communities of learning for both students and educators, as Chapter 7 demonstrated. Unfortunately, few principals and teachers have had serious and sustained opportunities to cultivate the skills associated with instructional leadership and the building of professional communities. This chapter outlines those processes and points the direction for school and district efforts in this area.

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DEVELOP PRINCIPALS

The most powerful forms of professional development for principals are standards-based and embedded in their daily work. Standards that guide principals' learning are of four types: standards for student learning, standards for teaching, standards for leadership, and standards for staff development. Each of these sets of standards adds an essential dimension to the professional learning of principals.

Standards for student learning such as those promulgated by states and school systems provide direction for a school's improvement efforts by helping the school determine its academic strengths and weaknesses. Standards for teaching, such as those developed by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, offer a benchmark against which the principal and teachers can compare their practices, provide a common vocabulary for instructional improvement, and give purpose and meaning to teacher evaluation. Standards for staff development guide leaders in selecting the content and learning processes for school employees (the National Staff Development Council's *Standards for Staff Development* are available on the Council's web site).

Similarly, standards for leadership, such as those developed by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (1996) provide direction for principals' learning. These standards say school leaders should have the ability to:

- Facilitate the development, articulate, implement, and provide stewardship for a vision of learning shared and supported by the school community;
- Nurture and sustain a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth;
- Manage the organization to promote an effective learning environment;
- Know how to collaborate with families and community members to mobilize community resources;
- Act with integrity and fairness to influence each school's larger political, social, and cultural context; and
- Understand, respond to, and influence the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

Principal development, which traditionally has been given an even lower priority by school systems than teacher development, too often turns participants into passive recipients of information rather than active participants in solving important educational problems. In a description that unfortunately has held up well across time, Susan Rosenholtz

(1989) views the consequences of this problem this way: "If districts take no responsibility for the inservice needs of principals, of course, principals become less able colleagues, less effective problem solvers, more reluctant to refer school problems to the central office for outside assistance, more threatened by their lack of technical knowledge, and, most essential, of substantially less help to teachers" (p. 189).

At the 1999 annual conference of the National Staff Development Council, 10 years after Rosenholtz's observation, Anthony Alvarado (Sparks, 2000) told his audience, "The truth is that the preparation of supervisors makes the preparation of teachers look outstanding. Principals and vice principals and superintendents rarely have good places to learn" (p. 2).

According to the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium's *Proposition for Quality Professional Development of School Leaders* (2000), the quality professional development of leaders:

- Validates teaching and learning as the central activities of the school;
- Engages all school leaders in planful, integrated, career-long learning to improve student achievement;
- Promotes collaboration to achieve organizational goals while meeting individual needs;
- Models effective learning processes; and
- Incorporates measures of accountability that direct attention to valued learning outcomes.

The Educational Research Service's publication *Professional Development for School Principals* (1999) says effective staff development for administrators is long-term and planned, focused on student achievement, job-embedded, supportive of reflective practice, and provides opportunities to work, discuss, and problem solve with peers. The publication suggests a number of professional development activities that incorporate these principles: journal keeping, peer study groups, support networks, administrator portfolios, team training for school improvement, and personal professional development plans.

Roland Barth (Sparks, 1993) believes schools provide the most powerful context for the continuing education of principals. "Schools are full of thoughtful people," he contends, "who are wrestling with significant problems. ...[W]e can turn these problems into opportunities for sharing craft knowledge and for invention. ... (p. 20).

Alvarado (Sparks, 2000) emphasizes the importance in principal development of regular visits to other schools. "One thing that we need is massive intervisitation ... to go places, to see practice that is actually the kind of practice that we want to implement" (p. 2). An-

other important element proposed by Alvarado (Sparks, 2000) is study groups in which principals consider problems, particularly those in the critical areas of reading and mathematics, and figure out what to do about them. "This sense of organizing ourselves through study groups, action research groups, or a wide variety of practitioner-related structures is essential to making progress in organizations," he said (p. 2).

Alvarado (Sparks, 2000) also supports coaching for principals. "You cannot change behavior, change practice in organizations, without large-scale coaching by people who know the content, who know how to do it, and who know how to help people learn," he says. "At the heart of it is the simple notion that you need someone working with you to model, to give feedback, to assist in the actual trying of the new practice, to support in the ongoing habituation of new practice. It is impossible to improve practice without access to high quality coaching" (p. 2).

Elaine Fink and Lauren Resnick (2001) discuss an approach used in New York City's District 2 that focused intensively on developing principals as instructional leaders. For the most part, the development of principals they describe takes place in schools and is geared to the specific circumstances in which principals work. Principals attend monthly daylong "principals' conferences" which are "... the primary vehicles for developing and building allegiance to the shared professional point of view of the district" (p. 601). In addition, principals participate in specialized institutes focused on particular instructional programs or practices, attend support groups and study groups, participate in "intervisitations" (visits to other schools to promote understanding of a specific practice) and "buddying" (informal meetings to share problems and strategies for their solution), and receive individualized coaching. New principals also participate in monthly support groups.

Dave Ellis (Sparks, 2001) advocates "life coaching" for school leaders, a variation on the type of coaching recommended by Alvarado. "The focus in life coaching is on what leaders can be, on how leaders can improve themselves such that the people around them are more likely to be effective in a more natural way. ... We talk about the client's ability to manage and lead and to improve the motivation, the involvement, and the energy of their staff members" (p. 59).

Life coaching often results in improved relationships, a key variable in leaders' success, according to Paul Houston (2001). "Leadership of the future," he writes, "will be about the creation and maintenance of relationships: the relationship of children to learning, children to children, children to adults, adults to adults, and school to community" (p. 431).

In summary, school systems that are serious about standards-based student learning and the quality of teaching will ensure that all principals (Sparks & Hirsh, 2000):

- Are members of ongoing study groups that delve deeply into the most important instructional issues in their schools;
- Regularly visit one another's schools to learn about outstanding practice, critique colleague's improvement efforts, and support one another in improving instruction; and
- Receive frequent coaching on critical skills such as working with teachers to improve instruction, analyzing data, and critiquing student work.

The development of principals cannot continue to be the neglected stepchild of state and district professional development efforts. It must be standards-focused, sustained, intellectually rigorous, and embedded in the principal's workday. Nothing less will lead to high levels of learning and performance by all students and teachers.

DEVELOPING TEACHER LEADERS

Schools cannot be places in which all students learn and perform at high levels unless teachers assume critical leadership responsibilities outside their classrooms. Effective teacher leadership requires that teachers overcome barriers and benefit from professional development similar to that provided to principals who serve as instructional leaders—standards-focused, sustained, intellectually rigorous, and part of their everyday work life.

Teacher leaders face barriers that range from a lack of skill related to unfamiliar responsibilities to the negative reactions of peers. "The press of time, the stress of building new relationships with colleagues, and the resistance of others to new ideas are just a few of the obstacles teacher leaders face," Gayle Moller (1999) notes (p. 14). Principal support is critical to teacher leaders' success in surmounting these barriers, Moller claims. "The interpersonal skills of the principal make the difference in the willingness of teacher leaders to take on these roles," she writes. "A principal who listens, encourages, and advocates for these teacher leaders gives them the courage to take on the formidable task of driving innovation within the school" (pp. 14-15).

If teachers are to successfully assume leadership roles, they must be well prepared and supported in discharging their new duties. Ann Lieberman, Ellen Saxl, and Matthew Miles (1988) found that teacher leaders must be skillful in building trust and establishing rapport with other teachers and administrators, diagnosing school context conditions, dealing with organizational processes, managing their own work, and building skill and confidence in others.

Lieberman (Sparks, 1999) stresses the importance of teacher leaders having challenging, organized learning experiences as well as informal ones. These experiences should specifically address "... what teachers need to know to lead, to understand school change, to deal with conflict, to understand school culture, and to create professional communities" (p. 56).

Carolee Hayes, Patrick Grippe, and Gene Hall (1999) describe such an effort to prepare elementary and middle school Building Resource Teachers (BRTs) in Douglas County, Colo. New BRTs have nine days of initial training on personal and professional transitions, facilitating change, effective staff development, and coaching, among other topics. BRTs also attend monthly training sessions in areas such as Cognitive Coaching and receive coaching from the director of staff development and the assistant superintendent, the authors point out.

MY ASSUMPTIONS

- Because few principals and teachers have had serious and sustained opportunities to cultivate the skills associated with instructional leadership and the building of professional communities, professional development for these new roles is essential.

- Powerful professional development for principals and teacher leaders is standards-based, intellectually rigorous, and embedded in their daily work.

- Effective teacher leadership requires challenging, organized professional learning and ongoing support.

FOR DISCUSSION

Write your assumptions regarding the areas addressed by my assumptions. Be specific and succinct. Dialogue with your group regarding your assumptions, remembering that the intention of dialogue is the nonjudgmental surfacing of assumptions rather than critiquing or seeking to change the assumptions of others.

Describe the nature of principal development in your school district and compare it with the forms of professional development recommended in this chapter.

Discuss the elements of principal development you desire in your school district, the major barriers to implementing those elements, and the district strengths that can be leveraged to make such learning possible.

Describe the ways that teacher leadership has been developed and used in your school or school district and how it might be strengthened in the future.

Specify what actions will be taken as a result of this discussion, who will take them, and by what date.

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PART IV

DEVELOP TEACHERS

Chapter 9
Focus Teacher Development on Student Learning

Chapter 10
Continuous Improvement of Teaching and Learning

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FOCUS TEACHER DEVELOPMENT ON STUDENT LEARNING

The discussions that lead up to the creation of the vision are a form of professional development and adult learning that generates a sense of "ownership" of new ideas and practices, rather than mere program "buy-in."

—Tony Wagner (2001, p. 56)

Earlier parts of this book provided a vision for the most powerful forms of professional learning, described school system responsibilities for achieving that vision, considered the value of professional learning communities, and discussed the development of principals and teacher leaders. This chapter and the next address a few of the most critical and fundamental aspects of teacher development. The approaches presented hold promise for changing not only the shape and look of professional development, but also for dramatically increasing its effect on instruction and student performance.

Some forms of staff development are far more effective than others in affecting teaching and improving student learning. It is clear that large-group "batch processing" of teachers who are "talked at" in the name of "exposing" them to new ideas are ineffective and squander teachers' good will regarding professional development. More often than not, staff development for teachers is fragmented and incoherent, lacks intellectual rigor, fails to build on existing knowledge and skills, and does little to assist them with the day-to-day challenges of improving student learning. For instance, a Chicago study found that only 25

percent of the system's schools received "high-quality" professional development (focused, exposed teachers to new academic content, provided opportunities for reflection, and involved collaborative work) (Blair et al., 2001).

There are dozens, if not hundreds, of ways in which schools attempt more or less effectively to promote professional learning. They range, for instance, from brief workshops on complex topics such as differentiated instruction and brain-compatible learning to long-term study groups on methods of gaining insight into students' cognitive processes to state and national subject-area networks. In addition, action research, curriculum development, and other forms of professional inquiry are used to deepen teachers' understanding of teaching and student learning. But these methods are not equal in their capacity to change practice and improve student learning.

Michael Garet and his colleagues (2001) bring a scholarly perspective to this issue. They used a national probability sample of teachers to determine the effects of different types of professional development on teachers' learning. "[O]ur results indicate that sustained and intensive professional development is more likely to have an impact...," they conclude. "Our results also indicate that professional development that focuses on academic subject matter (content), gives teachers opportunities for 'hands-on work' (active learning), and is integrated into the daily life of schools (coherence), is more likely to produce enhanced knowledge and skills. ... [O]ur results provide support for previous speculation about the importance of collective participation and the coherence of professional development activities" (pp. 935-936).

POWERFUL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Of the many topics that could be discussed in this section of the book, attention will be focused on a small number of core professional development processes that are often included in one form or another in the approaches mentioned in the preceding paragraph (NSDC's *Standards for Staff Development* and specific information about particular staff development models or programs can be found at www.nsdc.org/standards.htm). This chapter emphasizes the types of professional learning that occurs in schools as teachers consider their students' strengths and weaknesses, determine improvement goals, and identify the most powerful processes for their own learning. Chapter 10 will discuss the importance of teachers deepening their knowledge of the subjects they teach and expanding their repertoire of teaching strategies.

Powerful professional development uses information related to student learning for various purposes. Information regarding student learning can serve several important purposes in the staff development process. The most powerful forms of professional development use such information to determine staff development goals, to guide and motivate teacher learning, to monitor the impact of staff development on achievement, and to make appropriate mid-course corrections. It also may provide evidence to teachers that their changes in instructional practices are improving student learning.

Mike Schmoker (Sparks, 2000) believes data can help educators face difficult realities, select programs, and provide motivation by charting progress in achieving goals. "I think data should play a crucial role even before staff development begins—by helping to select the best, most results-oriented initiatives," he argues. "Every staff development proposal should be vetted on the basis of data that indicates that it has led—and will lead—to higher achievement. ... Because all school districts have limited staff development resources, they should put the lion's share of those funds into staff development that is aimed as directly as possible at the school's or team's measurable student achievement goals" (p. 51).

Elsewhere, Schmoker (1996) cites other important uses of data. "Data can help us confront what we may wish to avoid and what is difficult to perceive, trace, or gauge; data can substantiate theories, inform decision, impel action, marshal support, thwart misperceptions and unwarranted optimism, maintain focus and goal-orientation, and capture and sustain collective energy and momentum. Data help us answer the primary question 'What do we do next?' " he writes (p. 42).

If teachers and administrators are going to effectively use various types of data, staff development must equip them with the knowledge and skills to overcome their anxieties in this area and to be successful in performing these often unfamiliar tasks. The focus of this staff development includes understanding the purposes of different types of standardized tests, the sources of already existing data on various measures of student performance, and ways to gather evidence related to other indicators of student success important to the school. Staff development also must equip teachers with formative classroom assessment skills to enable them to determine the effects of staff development on student learning. The Winter 2000 issue of the *JSD* and the Council's web site (www.nsdc.org) provide numerous examples of this type of staff development.

Closely linked to the use of data is teachers' regular study of student work. Such study serves several important purposes. Rick Stiggins (Sparks, 1999) says it is important that

teachers master two tasks: the ability to clearly articulate the achievement targets they want students to hit and knowledge of how to transform those targets into quality, day-to-day indicators of achievement. In addition to improved student learning, Stiggins views the frequent monitoring of student progress as a powerful motivator for teachers. "Good formative assessment processes give teachers evidence that students are progressing," he argues, "and that's what will keep them going. Formative assessment gives teachers confidence that they're getting better and better" (p. 56). Unfortunately, most teachers have had little preservice or inservice training on how to use formative classroom assessment to monitor progress and improve instruction, Stiggins says.

The practice of teachers studying student work—a type of formative classroom assessment—is one of the most promising professional development strategies in recent years (Richardson, 2001). "It is our experience," writes Christopher Cross (2001) of the Council of Basic Education, "that nothing motivates and engages teachers more than examining student work and engaging in conversation with other teachers about how that work was achieved" (p. 3). The Looking At Student Work web site provides numerous examples of ways to examine student work.

Katherine Nolan (2000), director of Rethinking Accountability at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, identifies seven qualities common to studies of student work that have proven effective in improving the quality of teacher assignments and student work: reciprocal accountability, distributed leadership, protected meeting time, ready access to experts, inclusion of co-curricular teachers, use of protocols, and voluntary participation. Lois Easton (2002) advocates a particular approach to examining student work, the tuning protocol, which she describes as "... a form of collective inquiry that allows participants to work together on improving student learning (p. 28).

Powerful professional development focuses on a small number of student learning goals. The most powerful forms of professional development focus on a small number of goals for improved student learning. According to Michael Fullan (2001), staff development too often suffers from fragmentation and incoherence. Staff development efforts are based on the educational fad *du jour* with little thought given to the congruence between teacher learning and the school's goals for student learning. As a result, teachers' energies are dissipated and time and money are invested to little effect.

Without clear goals, Schmoker (1996) argues, collaboration is often futile, it is impossible to measure progress, and one-shot staff development fills the void. Goals also provide

a meaningful purpose for teamwork, he says. "If we wish to have energized employees who are steadily progressing toward the ultimate, long-term goal of providing a better, richer education for our students, then every member of every school should be working together in teams, not token or merely social teams, but goal-oriented units," he writes (p. 21).

Emily Calhoun (Sparks, 1999) recognizes the difficulty inherent in a faculty coming together to select schoolwide goals. "Getting the goal," she says, "is just the beginning. But it's a powerful beginning because it screens out some of the competing demands for time and attention and affects how resources will be allocated. ... When a faculty selects a goal it believes will make the most difference in the education of students, it is setting the parameters for collective study and action" (p. 55).

Calhoun (Sparks, 1999) also argues it is critical that improvement goals demonstrate high expectations for all students. "Sometimes I'll see a school goal that says something like 'students between the 30th and 50th percentiles will increase on the standardized test by five percentile points,' " she observes. "Sometimes the anticipated increases are just two percentile points. This says a lot about what the school expects" (p. 56).

Another consequence of a diffused focus is that teachers find it difficult to sustain enthusiasm when their efforts to improve student learning bear little fruit, as Tom Guskey (1986) maintains. Guskey argues that teachers' discernment of improvements in student learning plays a critical role in changing attitudes and sustaining momentum. Calhoun (Sparks, 1999) concurs. "If teachers can suspend disbelief long enough to become highly skilled in something that has a strong research base, then they can prove to themselves what can happen for their students," Calhoun says (p. 56).

Powerful professional development matches adult learning processes to intended outcomes. The most powerful forms of professional development match adult learning processes with the intended learning outcomes for students and the desired instructional practices for teachers. Just as it is important that teachers have at their fingertips various instructional strategies appropriate to different objectives and student learning-style preferences, so too staff development leaders must plan backwards from student learning outcomes to the types of curriculum, instruction, and assessment that will achieve those ends and backwards again to the content and processes for adult learning that will produce those results. While workshops and courses are the most familiar forms of professional development, they are often not the most appropriate to achieve certain objectives. Many types of activities that cause teachers to collaborate in serious and sustained ways

and to reflect on their work and its effects on student learning are important but typically overlooked.

Susan Loucks-Horsley (1999) identifies 15 learning strategies for teachers. "Selecting strategies is really the process of designing staff development," she points out. "It is a dynamic process similar to one teachers go through in designing lessons for their students. Staff development leaders have to ask themselves which strategies make sense to use at what particular time with that particular set of teachers for a particular set of outcomes" (p. 56). Another critical aspect of selecting professional development strategies is to make certain learning methods used with adults match the learning processes they are expected to use with their students to avoid the very real possibility that teachers will be lectured to about the importance of having students work in small groups with little or no opportunity to experience the process themselves as learners.

The ideas presented in this chapter are fundamental to high-quality professional development. Their successful execution, however, is essential, if teacher development is to improve the learning of all students. Chapter 10 will examine two additional "fundamental" aspects of teacher development—deepening teachers' knowledge of the subjects they teach and expanding their repertoire of teaching strategies.

MY ASSUMPTIONS

- Not all professional development is equal in its ability to influence teachers' classroom practice and improve student learning.

- Professional development is most powerful when it uses various types of evidence to select goals, determine improvement methods, monitor progress, and fine-tune staff development efforts.

- The analysis of student work can guide teachers' learning and improve teaching.

- Instruction is improved when professional development uses various types of professional learning processes based on its intended outcomes and employs the types of instruction it recommends to teachers.

FOR DISCUSSION

Write your assumptions regarding the areas addressed by my assumptions. Be specific and succinct. Dialogue with your group regarding your assumptions, remembering that the intention of dialogue is the nonjudgmental surfacing of assumptions rather than critiquing or seeking to change the assumptions of others.

Describe how professional development goals are determined for your school or school district and compare it with the processes recommended above.

Discuss the types of adult learning methods most commonly used in your school or school district and the extent to which they mirror the types of teaching practices encouraged in the school or school district.

Specify what actions will be taken as a result of this discussion, who will take them, and by what date.

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CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

There is plenty of evidence around that, when teachers know their content and know how to teach it at high levels to all students, "teaching to the test" fades into the background of everyday instruction and learning.

—Anne Lewis (2002, p. 488)

Many aspects of classroom teaching and learning can be observed and discussed — teacher plans and behavior, teacher-student interactions, diagnoses of student achievement, disaggregated test score data, actual samples of student performance and achievements, and teaching demonstrations.

—Carl Glickman (2002, p. 24)

The process of professional development advocated in this book begins with student learning goals in mind and engages teachers in various types of reflective learning relationships that are primarily but not exclusively formed among colleagues within a school. Tony Wagner (2001) describes it this way: "[T]eachers spend long hours discussing the curriculum and student work together. They are constantly in and out of one another's classrooms. Many classes are team-taught. Large- and small-group meetings of faculty members are a time for true collaborative inquiry and problem solving. Their relentless focus on improving teaching often leads teachers at these

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schools to reach out to educators from other schools, inviting them to help assess the quality of student work, teaching, and curriculum" (p. 56).

The professional development recommended here provides extensive classroom support to teachers. Given the intellectual and behavioral complexity of teaching and the interpersonal demands made on teachers by students, sustained classroom assistance related to the practical issues of instructional change is essential if staff development efforts are to lead to improved practice and significant gains in student learning. Such assistance includes demonstration lessons, coaching, and small-group problem solving. It can come from various sources—trainers, lead teachers, principals, and peers. The amount of in-school and in-classroom assistance required to change teaching practice is almost always underestimated by staff development leaders. In far too many instances, it is nonexistent.

POWERFUL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

While hundreds, if not thousands, of pages have been published describing the professional development mentioned above, this chapter focuses on a few of the most powerful professional learning processes available to teachers.

Powerful professional development deepens teachers' subject-area knowledge. Traditionally, a substantial portion of staff development has provided teachers with generic instructional skills such as cooperative learning separate from specific academic disciplines. Little attention was paid to teachers' knowledge of the subjects they teach and to instructional strategies within particular subject areas.

Lee Shulman points out the importance of teachers possessing deep knowledge of the subjects they teach and coins the term "pedagogical content knowledge" (Shulman, 1986) to describe the special kind of subject-matter understanding that enables them to support the learning of their students. He argues that successful teaching requires teachers to understand their discipline in such a way that they are able to anticipate common misconceptions that students bring to the study of that subject and can provide alternative representations of the material for students who have difficulty learning it.

Susan Loucks-Horsley (Sparks, 1997) also stresses the importance of "pedagogical content knowledge," which she describes as "... more than knowing content or how to teach in a generic way. It's understanding what aspects of the content students can learn at a particular developmental stage, how to represent it to them, and how to lead them into different conceptual understandings. ... Knowing the content is not enough" (p. 20).

The 1990s were a decade of reform driven by the development of standards in various disciplines. As states adopted these standards and designed tests to determine whether students were meeting them, various experts and national education groups argued that successful teachers possess deep knowledge of their subjects and that standards-based reform and the high-stakes tests that accompanied them mandated that inservice teachers study their disciplines and use the most effective methods for teaching that content (Ball & Cohen, 1996; Lawton, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 1998b).

At the same time, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (1997) identified the knowledge and skills of "accomplished teachers" and established a process by which teachers could certify their achievement of those standards. The National Commission on Teaching & America's Future summed it up in *What Matters Most: Teaching and America's Future:* "To be effective, teachers must know their subject matter so thoroughly that they can present it in a challenging, clear, and compelling way" (p. 6).

Diana Rigden (2000) shares that view. "Research demonstrates that there is a strong, reliable relationship between teachers' content knowledge and the quality of their instruction. Teachers with a deep conceptual understanding of their subject ask a greater number of high-level questions, encourage students to apply and transfer knowledge, help students see and understand relationships between and among ideas and concepts, and make other choices in their instruction that engage students and challenge them to learn" (p. 1).

Also during the 1990s, a number of staff development leaders called for using new methods to simultaneously deepen teachers' content knowledge and instructional skills within specific disciplines. James Pennell and William Firestone (1998) recommend professional networks and Linda Darling-Hammond (1996, 1998a) advocates professional assessment, teacher academies, and peer review. Loucks-Horsley and her colleagues (1998) add action research, case discussions, professional networking, examining student work, coaching, and mentoring.

Educators have long relied on graduate courses as the source of additional knowledge in their disciplines. Now school districts—either singly or in partnership with universities—are increasingly offering their own workshops or courses aimed at improving teachers' content knowledge. Teachers also can deepen their content knowledge by writing curriculum, forming study groups, doing research, or scoring assessments for statewide testing in their disciplines. Teachers also might spend time on-the-job in a field related to their discipline. For example, a journalism teacher could work in a newspaper office during the summer, an art teacher might serve as a docent in a museum, or a social studies teacher

might research and write about an aspect of state history.

Ideally, as teachers continue to study their content they also will be experiencing what it is like to be a learner of these disciplines—teachers learn the content deeply, learn how to think and act like practitioners of that discipline, and simultaneously acquire instructional strategies for teaching their students. Professional development in science (Irving, Dickson, & Keyser, 2000) and writing (Kelly, 2000) often includes such features.

Alan Stoskopf (2001) describes the "methods of history" and the value of "historical thinking skills" in the classroom, skills such as point of view, credibility of evidence, historical context, causality, and multiple perspectives. "The type of high-quality historical investigation mentioned in this article," he writes, "is enhanced when teachers have smaller classes, longer teaching blocks, released time to meet with colleagues to discuss their craft and their students' needs, and access to resources that allow them to get the professional development they need in order to do high-quality work" (p. 473).

The most powerful forms of professional development engage teachers in the continuous improvement of their teaching and expands the repertoire of instructional approaches they use to teach that content. A growing consensus on the characteristics of quality teaching has emerged in the past decade through the efforts of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and the findings of various researchers, such as those whose work is summarized in the *Handbook on Improving Student Achievement* (Cawelti, 1999). While the improvement of instruction can occur through training, coaching, critical friends groups, study groups, and other reflective processes, one of the most obvious and direct ways to improve teaching is to have teachers continuously work with others to improve the quality of their lessons and examine student work to to determine whether those lessons are assisting all students to achieve at high levels.

Some of the most interesting support for that approach comes from international studies of teaching. In comparing teacher development in the United States with that in Japan, James W. Stigler and James Hiebert (1997) write, "The approach to improving teaching used in Japan is not based on distributing written reports, or on reforming features of instruction, or on assuming that teachers will change when surrounding elements change. It is based on the direct study of teaching, with the goal of steady improvement in the mathematics learning of students" (p. 20).

Teacher development in Japan, Stigler and Hiebert (1997) observe, begins with clearly stated goals for student learning, but is followed by career-long engagement in a "... relentless, continu-

ous process of improving their lessons to improve students' opportunities to achieve the learning goals" (p. 20). On the other hand, teacher development in the United States, Stigler and Hiebert contend, has no mechanism for teachers to improve gradually over time, based in part on the U.S. assumption that good teachers are born, not made, and that "... good teaching comes through artful and spontaneous interactions with students during lessons" (p. 20).

Stigler and Hiebert elaborate on these ideas in *The Teaching Gap: Best Ideas from the World's Teachers for Improving Education in the Classroom* (1999) which describes some of the most important teacher development implications of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study. "Compared with other countries," the authors write, "the United States clearly lacks a system for developing professional knowledge and for giving teachers the opportunity to learn about teaching" (pp. 12-13).

Stigler and Hiebert point out that teachers operate from a "script for teaching" that is culturally determined and based on a relatively small number of tacit beliefs about the nature of their subjects, how students learn, and the teacher's role in the classroom. The most powerful means to change these beliefs and classroom practice, Stigler and Hiebert say, is the Japanese technique of "lesson study." Lesson study is a collaborative process in which a group of teachers identify an instructional problem, plan a lesson (which involves finding books and articles on the topic), teach the lesson (one member of the group teaches the lesson while the others observe), evaluate and revise the lesson, teach the revised lesson, again evaluate that lesson, and share their results with other teachers.

Criticizing America's penchant for shining a spotlight on "heroic individual teachers" who are applauded for their innovations, Stigler and Hiebert (1999) point out that the acts of these individuals will never improve teaching in the average classroom. Lesson study, they reason, provides a process for the continuous improvement of teaching in all classrooms.

While Stigler and Hiebert's proposals by themselves will not eliminate the "staff development gap" that exists in far too many schools, they do provide a practical method for continuous improvement of teaching that puts teachers at the center of the change process rather than on its periphery. As both North American and international studies make clear, linking teacher learning to student learning and focusing on the daily improvement of instructional practice makes a difference in student achievement. While that may not be rocket science, research and practical experience are teaching us that it is the core premise that drives powerful staff development efforts.

Chapters 9 and 10 have examined a small number of fundamental ideas regarding pro-

fessional development. They have been implemented in different ways by various types of schools across the country and around the world. Part V of this book will explore what is necessary for them to become common practice in all schools.

MY ASSUMPTIONS

- Powerful professional development engages all teachers in sustained, intellectually rigorous study of what they teach and how they teach it.

- Expanding teachers' repertoire of instructional practices assists them in meeting the diverse learning requirements of their students.

- Lesson study is a useful strategy for continuously improving the quality of teaching and student learning.

FOR DISCUSSION

Write your assumptions regarding the areas addressed by my assumptions. Be specific and succinct. Dialogue with your group regarding your assumptions, remembering that the intention of dialogue is the nonjudgmental surfacing of assumptions rather than critiquing or seeking to change the assumptions of others.

Discuss the extent to which professional development in your school or school district has deepened teachers' knowledge of the subjects they teach.

Describe ways in which teachers work together to strengthen the quality of their teaching through lesson study or similar processes. Consider what proportion of teachers are engaged in such ongoing study and ways that number could be increased.

Specify what actions will be taken as a result of this discussion, who will take them, and by what date.

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PART V

GET TO THE HEART OF THE MATTER

Chapter 11
Look for Root Causes

Chapter 12
Lead for a Transformation in Professional Learning

Chapter 13
The Power of What We Think

Chapter 14
Create Schools in Which Everyone's Job Is To Learn

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LOOK FOR ROOT CAUSES

We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. ...We already know more than we need to know to accomplish this task.

—Ron Edmonds (1979, p. 22)

A growing body of research ... makes it clear that poverty and ethnicity are not the primary causal variables related to student achievement. These demographic variables have strength only when researchers fail to measure teaching and leadership variables. In other words, when the adults in the system—teachers and leaders—start to take responsibility for their role in educational accountability, it becomes much more difficult to blame children and parents for poor student achievement.

—Doug Reeves (2000, p. 26)

Most of the real obstacles to change in education are not "out there" but inside us.

—Tom Gregory (2001, p. 580)

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chapter eleven

As previous chapters made clear, the evidence for the value of sustained, high-quality professional development for teachers and administrators is rich and compelling. In fact, Willis Hawley and Linda Valli (2000) have concluded that "... in the last few years, we have witnessed the development of consensus among both researchers and expert educators about the essential characteristics of effective professional development" (p. 9).

And yet, in the face of ever-growing evidence, only a small portion of what is known about quality staff development is regularly used in schools. The daily practice of teaching and leadership have been virtually untouched in most schools in spite of the investment of billions of dollars and a great deal of effort.

Part of the problem is strategic and structural. "Few school districts treat professional development as a part of an overall strategy for school improvement," Richard Elmore (2002) points out. "In fact, many districts do not even have an overall strategy for school improvement. Instead, districts tend to see staff development as a specialized activity within a bureaucratic structure" (p. 10).

Other reasons are often given to explain the prevalence of low-quality professional development — a paucity of credible research, a lack of time and money, teacher isolation, and individual and organizational resistance to change. While these impediments are real, many schools have found their way around them to provide powerful professional learning that has resulted in significant improvements in student learning.

To the extent that a lack of convincing evidence is really a problem, a study published by the Educational Testing Service and the Milken Foundation should put those doubts to rest. *How Teaching Matters: Bringing the Classroom Back into Discussions of Teacher Quality* (2000) by Harold Wenglinsky revealed that certain types of professional development help teachers improve student achievement. The study found, for instance, that students whose teachers received professional development in working with special populations outperformed their peers by more than a full grade level and that students whose teachers received professional development in higher-order thinking skills outperformed their peers by 40 percent of a grade level. If ETS distributed this study to all schools, I wonder, would there be a substantial improvement in the quality of staff development? My experience and that of others whose views I have sought tell me that such dissemination would have little impact.

So, given the widespread consensus on the value of professional development and the

characteristics of the most effective professional development experiences, what is necessary for this knowledge to become common practice? For me, that is the heart of the problem.

A DEEPER ANALYSIS OF THE BARRIERS: LOOKING FOR ROOT CAUSES

This chapter and those that follow are filled with my views on the root causes of the problem and what can be done about them. To set the stage, I present the views of Tom Gregory and Tony Wagner. Gregory (2001), after describing a professor's view that trying to bring about change was like "mowing around the redwoods," observes: "I see most of the apparently formidable obstacles to structural change in education as illusory. Many obstacles — even some scary ones — tend to evaporate when we muster the courage (or the effrontery) to attempt to push them aside. Most of the real obstacles to change are not 'out there' but inside us. We each have our own personal collection of educational bogeymen who we're afraid to confront" (p. 580).

Wagner (2001) also ponders what motivates adults to want to do new and sometimes very difficult things. He argues that educators are risk adverse by nature, have a temperamental disposition for autonomy, and have suffered from isolation that has left them feeling both powerless and victimized. Wagner suggests appealing to teachers' sense of caring about their students and lists four conditions for adult learning in schools: a shared vision of the goals of teaching and learning, an understanding of the urgent need for change, relationships based on mutual respect, and engagement strategies that create commitment rather than compliance. Of the last condition, Wagner says, "... a shared sense of community nurtures active engagement in learning and collaborative problem solving. Both students and teachers learn more and do more when they feel a part of something important that is larger than themselves and that they have helped to create" (p. 383).

A MORE PERSONAL STORY

Because my journey to a deeper understanding and root causes of this problem is a unique one, I will tell this part of the story in a more personal way. In 1999, I began receiving life coaching provided to the CEOs of nonprofits by the Brande Foundation of Rapid City, S.D. Through weekly hour-long telephone conversations with Bill Rentz, my life coach, and attendance at workshops focused on creating the life of one's dreams, I became more clear about what I wanted in all areas of life and developed action plans to make those goals a reality.

About a year later, Stephanie Hirsh, NSDC's deputy executive director, and I partici-

pated in a series of meetings sponsored by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation and conducted exclusively for us by Larry Hirschhorn of the Center for Applied Research. During these meetings, at which we considered the root causes of the low levels of implementation of quality staff development practices, I came to see that the most significant barriers were not those cited above.

Several additional experiences then led me still deeper in my investigation. In 2001, I interviewed for the *Journal of Staff Development* Peter Senge and Robert Quinn, authors whose work I deeply admired. Both interviews underscored the lessons that I was learning through life coaching and the Clark Foundation-sponsored meetings. Books by Robert Quinn (*Change the World: How Ordinary People Can Accomplish Extraordinary Results*), Robert Kegan and Lisa Laskow Lahey (*How the Way We Talk Can Change the Way We Work*), and Richard Pascale, Mark Millemann, and Linda Gioja (*Surfing the Edge of Chaos*) provided additional insights into the problem.

WHAT I LEARNED

The things I learned from these processes provide a context for this book's remaining chapters. Here are four broad conclusions:

1. District and school leaders play an essential and irreplaceable role in creating high-quality professional learning for all teachers. While quality teaching is obviously "where the rubber meets the road," such teaching cannot be ensured in all classrooms for all students without skillful leadership. And while teacher leadership is essential to significant improvement in schools, it is far less likely to occur and be sustained without skillful principals. No one — researchers, consultants, and the well-meaning authors of books — can compensate for the lack of skillful and committed leadership at the district and schools levels.

Using business terminology, Peter Senge (Webber, 1999) expresses it this way: "In case after case, the most compelling lesson we learned was that if you want real, significant, sustainable change, you need talented, committed local line leaders. Find the people who are the heart of the value-generating process — who design, produce, and sell products; who provide services; who talk to customers. Those value-generating activities are the province of the line manager, and if the line manager is not innovating, then innovation is not going to occur" (p. 186).

Phil Schlechty (2001) believes school leaders must become "transformational" rather than "transactional." "Transformational leadership," he writes, "requires the leader to em-

brace and cause others to embrace new and revolutionary assumptions" rather than "... only to improve operational effectiveness based on well-established and commonly accepted assumptions" (p. 165).

Based on interviews with 43 eminent educational leaders, Mark Goldberg (2001) concludes that five qualities were held in common by these individuals: a bedrock belief in the potency and usefulness of one's work, the courage to swim upstream no matter how long it takes or what the obstacles, the exercise of social conscience, a seriousness of purpose, and the fit of one's talents to the task at hand. The topic of leadership will be developed at length in Chapter 12.

2. Habits of thought and behavior are more significant barriers to the improvement of professional learning than time, money, and the current state of research. Countless schools excel even in the most difficult circumstances. In many instances, these schools do not have resources or time that exceed those of less successful schools with similar demographics. In my view, schools are limited to a large extent by habits of behavior and thought — fundamental choices, mental models, and "big assumptions" — that limit possibility and invention. These ideas are described more fully in Chapters 13 and 14.

Not wanting to risk misinterpretation on this important subject, I want to underscore here my belief that most schools would benefit from additional time and money focused on high leverage areas. This is particularly true in schools serving high concentrations of low-income and minority students and those that have made significant movement on the journey toward higher performance.

Nonetheless, I concur with Richard Elmore (2002), who concludes: "Spending more money on existing professional development activities, as most are presently designed, is unlikely to have any significant effect on either the knowledge and skill of educators or on the performance of students" (p. 6). "The fact that most school systems do not already have a coherent and powerful professional development system is, itself, evidence that they would not know what do to with increased professional development funding," he adds (p. 23).

Continuing his analysis, Elmore (2002) points out that "the evidence is now substantial that there is considerable money available in most district budges to finance large-scale improvement efforts that use professional development effectively. The money is there. The problem is that it's already spent on other things and it has to be reallocated to focus on student achievement" (p. 27).

While research on various subjects can play an important role in professional develop-

ment, what ultimately matters to local decision makers is whether their investment has paid off in improved learning for students in their schools. The type of evidence I believe is most valued by school districts in their day-to-day decision making is presented below.

3. Local evaluation studies of staff development are more important than large-scale "definitive" research to demonstrate the value of staff development. What matters most in the quality of professional learning are the tens of thousands of decisions made each year in schools and district offices about school improvement and staff development that collectively determine the effectiveness of those efforts. Critics contend that the quality of those decisions is often low. "The field of staff development is too tolerant of practices and activities that are superficial, wasteful, ineffective, disingenuous, perhaps fraudulent, and even harmful, but continue unchallenged day after day, year after year," Hayes Mizell (2000) said at the initial meeting of the NSDC's project, Evaluating Staff Development: Demonstrating the Impact. "There are too few advocates for powerful staff development," Mizell continued, "and too few vocal opponents of practices and activities that merely masquerade under the label 'staff development' " (p. 7).

Missing too often from district and school planning efforts is a "theory of change," an explication of the relationship among the parts of the reform effort and how they will lead to high levels of learning for all students and staff members. Instead of providing a clear, compelling logic, plans often enter the "zone of wishful thinking" about the impact improvement efforts are likely to have on student learning. Well-conceived theories of change are not only an aid to planning, they provide points of reference that assist in developing evaluation strategies.

While improved test scores are one measure of success, other indicators are also important and don't require waiting many months for knowledge of results. "Measurements that would help gauge the effectiveness of professional development include reviews of staff development programs, guides to using data, case studies, and new forms of evaluations better designed to reflect the impact of staff development," Joellen Killion and Stephanie Hirsh (2001, p. 38) note.

Tom Guskey (2000) provides numerous "new forms" of evaluation that can be readily adopted by schools and school systems that fall into five categories: participants' reactions, participants' learning, organization support and change, participants' use of new knowledge and skills, and student learning outcomes. In the latter case, Guskey points out that data can be collected related to cognitive, affective, and psychomotor outcomes. Information related to cognitive performance — which is of highest interest in most schools — can be gathered

from standardized assessments, teacher-developed classroom assessments, group tasks or activities, teacher grades, questionnaires and interviews, and school records related to attendance, enrollment in advanced or honors classes, student retention, or students referred for special services, among other sources.

Guskey (2000) make a critical distinction between evidence and proof. Policy makers who ask for scientific proof of staff development's effectiveness, Guskey contends, are asking for the impossible. "Arguments about whether you can absolutely, positively isolate the impact of professional development on improvements in students performance are generally irrelevant," he writes. "In most cases, you simply cannot get ironclad proof. To do so, you would need to eliminate or control for all other factors that could have caused the change. ... The problem, of course, is that nearly all professional development takes place in real-world settings where such experimental conditions are impossible to meet" (p. 87).

Rather than seeking proof, Guskey points to the value of "evidence" that is significant to interested parties. Such evidence may include pre- and post-measures, meaningful comparison groups, and even anecdotes and testimonials.

Bruce Joyce (Sparks, 1998) agrees, arguing that simple techniques such as teacher logs can be used to study teachers' learning as a result of staff development. Furthermore, he argues that improvements in teaching and learning can occur much more quickly than many educators expect. Citing a review of the literature, he observes that "we didn't find any examples in which people focused on something of importance that didn't produce effects in the first year. If the change in content or teaching/learning process is going to affect the kids, it is going to affect them very rapidly" (p. 34).

Joyce (Sparks, 1998) also notes the value of teachers learning simple assessment strategies as part of staff development focused on particular instructional practices so that they can better assess the impact of these practices on students. "Staff development that improves student achievement embeds formative evaluation in the day-to-day teaching and learning process and becomes collective action research for the trainers and for the teachers who are learning to teach more effectively," he contends. "It's not expensive or difficult to study implementation when it's an embedded part of one's work. That's very different, however, from how staff development is currently practiced" (p. 34).

Well-designed evaluation at the local level serve two additional critical purposes — they provide information that can lead to mid-course improvements and they can provide teachers with information that helps them persist over time by changing their attitudes and

enhancing their sense of efficacy. "[T]he relationship between changes in behavior, on the one hand, and changes in beliefs or understanding, on the other hand, require careful consideration ...," writes Michael Fullan (2001). "The relationship between behavioral and belief change is reciprocal and ongoing, with change in doing or behavior a necessary experience on the way to breakthroughs in meaning and understanding" (p. 92).

4. The redesign of teachers' workdays is fundamental to significant improvements in teaching and student learning. "Schools that are truly learning communities for students and teachers alike require time for teachers to study and collaborate during the school day," Margaret Wheatley (2002) notes. "If we want our world to be different, our first act needs to be reclaiming time to think" (p. 99). While the more effective use of existing inservice days and of faculty, department, and grade-level meetings for professional learning is a starting point, it soon becomes insufficient to sustain innovation and collaboration over many months and years.

As is true with other significant aspects of public education, the arrangement of the school day is deeply entwined in tradition and with various systemic factors. In addition, time and other resource issues also can serve as a convenient way to deflect responsibility and provide an excuse for inaction, Nancy Adelman (1998) concludes. "Time — or the lack of it — is often a barrier, an excuse, a scapegoat, and a defense for everyone," she says (p. 91).

"[T]he design of work in schools is fundamentally incompatible with the practice of improvement ...," Elmore (2002) argues. "The problem with this design is that it provides almost no opportunity for teachers to engage in continuous and sustained learning about their practice in the setting in which they work, observing and being observed by their colleagues in their own classrooms and in the classrooms of other teachers in other schools confronting similar problem of practice" (p. 29).

To elaborate further, Tony Bryk and his colleagues (1998) in a study of school reform noted the importance of collaborative work cultures: "In schools making systemic changes, structures are established which create opportunities for such interactions to occur. As teachers develop a broader say in school decision making, they also may begin to experiment with new roles, including working collaboratively. This restructuring of teachers' work signifies a broadening professional community where teachers feel more comfortable exchanging ideas, and where a collective sense of responsibility for student development is likely to emerge" (p. 128).

While these conclusions are certainly not novel, they provide a backdrop for the chapters that follow.

MY ASSUMPTIONS

- Only a small portion of what is known about quality staff development is regularly used in schools.

- District and school leaders play an essential and irreplaceable role in improving the quality of professional learning in schools.

- Time, money, and the current state of research are not as significant to improving professional learning as are new ways of thinking and acting.

- Local evaluation studies are more important in improving staff development than "definitive" studies conducted in other settings.

- The redesign of teachers' workdays is fundamental to significant improvements in teaching and student learning.

FOR DISCUSSION

Write your assumptions regarding the areas addressed by my assumptions. Be specific and succinct. Dialogue with your group regarding your assumptions, remembering that the intention of dialogue is the nonjudgmental surfacing of assumptions rather than critiquing or seeking to change the assumptions of others.

Discuss your views regarding the most significant barriers to high quality professional development whose removal would lead to sustained professional learning by all teachers and administrators in your school or school system.

Specify what actions will be taken as a result of this discussion, who will take them, and by what date.

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LEAD FOR A TRANSFORMATION IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The transformational change agent says, "Here is the standard, which I know is impossible, so let's stand together and learn our way into a higher level of performance."
—Robert Quinn (2000, p. 164)

Leaders matter. What leaders think and do and how they interact with others has a profound effect on the level of performance of the organizations in which they work. This chapter argues that leaders' influence comes not from their power to direct behavior but from a wide-ranging set of behaviors that "perturb" the system and focus the organization on achieving its highest purposes.

Because change is always personal, leadership is about feelings, commitment, and relationships as much as it is about altering specific processes or practices. Michael Fullan (2001) argues that because significant change often involves feelings of loss, anxiety and struggle, the importance of addressing the human dimension of the change process cannot be overemphasized. "Educational change is technically simple and socially complex," he says (p. 69). Recent scientific discoveries about complex adaptive systems help us better understand the challenges of successful school leadership.

LEADERSHIP IN COMPLEX ADAPTIVE SYSTEMS

Leaders can learn from nature, Richard Pascale, Mark Millemann, and Linda Gioja (2000) argue, particularly from recent understandings regarding complex adaptive systems.

Such systems, they say, are composed of independent agents that act in parallel as they learn and adapt. "Let us be clear," they note. " 'Living systems' isn't a metaphor for how human institutions operate. It is the way it is" (p. 7).

In complex adaptive systems, equilibrium is a precursor to death because organizations in such a state are less responsive to changes around them, Pascale and his co-authors say (2000). "Prolonged equilibrium is a precursor of disaster ...," they observe (p. 21).

Living systems cannot be directed along a linear path beyond very general goals. "Unforeseen consequences are inevitable," Pascale and his colleagues write. "The challenge is to disturb them in a manner that approximates the desired outcome" (p. 6). Consequently, nimbleness rather than control is a fundamental attribute of effective leadership. "The insight that we cannot direct but only artfully disturb a living system does not prevent us from taking bold action," they say (p. 170).

Pascale and his colleagues suggest actions that leaders can take to improve effectiveness:

- Establish a compelling goal that draws the organization out of its comfort zone;
- Change the conversation (particularly about aspirations and beliefs);
- Involve the right people in the conversation (anyone who can thwart the change effort and leave no trace of his or her resistance must be included);
- Insist on uncompromising straight talk to "foster relentless discomfort and fuel disequilibrium";
- Increase discomfort through well-documented facts about the adaptive challenge, creating a sense of urgency about the importance of a "discontinuous shift" to force people out of their comfort zone; and
- Generate and disseminate ideas that lead to breakthroughs in thinking and behavior.

CHANGE BEGINS WITH A CHANGE IN LEADERS

Robert Kegan and Lisa Laskow Lahey (2001) construct a well-reasoned rationale for the importance of personal change in leaders: Leading involves trying to effect significant changes; these changes are hard to bring about without changing individual behavior; it is hard to sustain changes in individual behavior without changes in an individual's underlying meaning which gives rise to the behavior; and it is very hard to lead others to change without leaders considering the possibility that their behavior must also change. "[I]f we want deeper understanding of the prospect of change," they conclude, "we must pay closer

attention to our own powerful inclinations not to change" (p. 1).

Robert Quinn (2000) touts the power of transformational leadership and the impact that individuals in all positions can have on those around them and on the organization. "We can each become transformational change agents," he writes. "We do not need to be world leaders, leaders of an organization, or even the head of a family to do this. Each of us can make a significant contribution to positive change in ourselves, our relationships, and in any organization or culture in which we take part. ... Transforming a human system usually requires that we transform ourselves, and this is a key to the process" (Quinn, 2000). Elaborating further on this notion, Quinn writes, "To do that we need to go inside ourselves and ask who we are, what we stand for, and what impact we really want to have. Within ourselves, we find principle, purpose, and courage" (p. 19).

How does that produce change in others? "My new behavior distorts the balance or equilibrium ...," Quinn (2000) writes. "New patterns of behavior usually only occur when I, the change agent, have a new viewpoint and a new purpose" (p. 201). Such leaders, Quinn says, begin the change process by looking within, transcending their own fears, embodying a vision of the common good, and enticing others through moral power.

Quinn (Sparks, 2001) also notes that it is common for people to establish comfort zones—places of habit in which they know they can exist without effort. Such habits often leaves educators' performance in the middle of the normal curve of distribution, with only a few becoming "positive deviants," a subject that will be explored more fully in Chapter 14. "Systems don't like either positive or negative deviance, though, and are designed to crush both," he says. "So if we take the risks to be excellent, the system will push back" (p. 49).

Moving out of one's comfort zone, Quinn (Sparks, 2001) contends, requires writing new "scripts," the story for one's life and how things work that may also be called paradigms or mental models. "But when we muster the courage to act on new scripts, amazing things happen," he contends. "When people become empowered, they realize that they had put constraints upon themselves. Suddenly, they are able to do all kinds of things we previously thought were impossible" (p. 51).

Moving out of one's comfort zone also requires facing one's fears, Quinn (Sparks, 2001) argues. "We all have a deeply rooted fear that we are zeroes, and that if we try something and fail it will confirm that fear. But the greater fear is that we have enormous potential that we are not using. We fear that we will get to the end of our lives and discover that we could have done much more but that we chose not to. There is good reason for that fear

because enormous responsibility comes with the awareness that 'we are powerful beyond measure' " (p. 52).

Slow death—a place of comfort and habit that may lead to anger and depression— is especially common in "don't rock the boat" cultures, Quinn (1996) observes. "Slow death," he writes, "is the devil we know, so we prefer it to the devil we do not know" (p. 24). It is characterized by denial, dishonesty, a lack of vitality, and a focus on staying busy rather than doing the right thing.

Roland Barth (2001) describes slow death and its consequences this way: "A major reason so many students are at risk as learners in our schools is that they are surrounded by so many at-risk educators. Tragically, schools are all too full of 'corpses' who faithfully, persistently, heroically each day place oxygen masks on youngsters' faces, while they themselves are anoxic" (pp. 24-25). Consequently, Barth believes personal change must precede and accompany collecti e change.

"Deep change," Quinn writes (1996), "differs from incremental change in that it requires new ways of thinking and behaving. It is change that is major in scope, discontinuous with the past, and generally irreversible. The deep change effort distorts existing patterns of action and involves taking risks" (p. 3). Individuals who undergo such change, he argues, "... are master change agents capable of making deep change in themselves, in their relationships, and in their organizations" (p. 12).

Deep change in organizations first means deep changes in one's self. "To thwart our defense mechanisms and bypass slow death, we must confront first our own hypocrisy and cowardice ...," Quinn (1996) argues. "[W]e become aligned and revitalized because we are committed to the truth. We find the vision to empower both ourselves and our community" (pp. 78-79).

Quinn (1996) says such changes in individuals can lead them to become potent change agents. "When we have successfully experienced a deep change, it inspires us to encourage others to undergo a similar experience. We are all potential change agents. As we discipline our talents, we deepen our perceptions about what is possible," he writes (p. xiii).

FORMING NEW TYPES OF RELATIONSHIPS

The nature of relationships among educators within schools and between those in schools and all those outside who seek to change them is an often overlooked but critically important factor in reform efforts. So, too, is the language used by leaders.

Barth (2001) describes relationships within schools as too often being "independent and isolated, or adversarial and competitive" (p. 157), noting "... the primitive quality of the relationships among teachers . ... Many teachers seem to lack the personal, interpersonal, and group skills essential to the successful exercise of leadership and to working together" (pp. 95-96). He later notes, "... the relationship among the adults in the schoolhouse has more impact on the quality and the character of the school—and on the accomplishment of youngsters—than any other factor . ... Among adult relationships in schools, that between teacher and principal is decisive. I have found no characteristic of a good school more pervasive than healthy teacher-principal relationships ..." (p. 105).

The belief that a few people "know" (leaders or experts) and most people ought to follow their lead is widespread. While educators are often taught to take their lead from the market sector in which command-and-control structures are still often practiced, other points of view have emerged in recent years. "Leaders in business and industry have learned from hard experience that fear and coercion are counterproductive," John Jay Bonstingl (2001) writes. "The best results come from people working creatively and collaboratively, rather than from the imposition of a culture based on command, compliance, and control" (p. 10).

Relationships in schools are often described as patriarchal, with an uneven distribution of power and a view that teachers and principals require "remediation" by district leaders, consultants, and researchers who know more than they do. Teachers and principals are seldom seen as truly equal partners capable of making significant contributions to reform and of meaningful engagement in inventing solutions rather than simply receiving the "guidance" and wisdom of others.

One way in which unequal relationships are revealed is when those in district offices, state education agencies, universities, and professional associations speak of what teachers "need" and "must" or "should" do to implement various lists of desired practices generated by researchers and consultants. Such language can imply a superior status on the part of the speaker and a belief that even "experts" who know little about local context have superior wisdom about solutions to problems faced by teachers and principals.

Parker Palmer (1998) addresses this issue by describing the "objectivist myth." According to this myth, "... truth flows from the top down, from experts who are qualified to know truth ... to amateurs who are qualified only to receive truth" (p. 101). Instead, Palmer understands "truth" "... as the passionate and disciplined process of inquiry and dialogue itself, as the dynamic conversation of a community that keeps testing old conclusions and coming into

new ones . ... But it is not our knowledge of conclusions that keeps us in the truth. It is our commitment to the conversation itself. As far as I can tell, the only 'objective' knowledge we possess is the knowledge that comes from a community of people looking at a subject and debating their observations within a consensual framework of procedural rules" (p. 105).

In describing the tension between the contrasting views of teachers as semi-skilled workers and as full-fledged professionals, Barry McGhan (2001) writes, "In my darkest hours of reflection on the future of teacher leadership, I attribute this ambivalence to a fundamental lack of trust in teachers. I attribute it partly to male chauvinism, since so many teachers are women and so many administrators are men. It is no surprise that people who are treated like children will begin to act like children and will become dependent and in need of 'fatherly' advice' " (p. 724).

Senge (Webber, 2001) sees the "cult of the CEO-as-hero" as a significant barrier. "When we enact the pattern of the CEO as hero," he asserts, "we infantalize the organization: That kind of behavior keeps everyone else in the company at a stage of development in which they can't accept their own possibilities for creating things. ... The cult of the hero-leader only creates a need for more hero-leaders" (pp. 185-186). The same might be said about the hero-school administrator or consultant.

Senge (Sparks, 2001) notes that people in organizations are often obsessed with fixing things or remediating problems. "They spend their lives trying to fix things that are broken," he says. "This obsession with problem solving diverts our attention from a far more important activity, which is creating the new" (p. 45).

The language leaders use can have a powerful effect on both its originator and recipients. Kegan and Lahey (2001) note that language forms are a tool and building blocks for transformation. "The places where we work and live are, among other things, places where certain forms of speech are promoted or encouraged, and places where other ways of talking are discouraged or made impossible ...," they write. "We are also referring to how we speak to ourselves, which, though too rarely considered, is one of the most influential and continuous conversational venues. ... Some language forms concentrate more individual and social energy than others do; they provide more focus, increase direction, and enhance capacity ..." (p. 7).

Leaders, Kegan and Lahey (2001) argue, lead language communities: "Though every person, in any setting, has some opportunity to influence the nature of the language, leaders have exponentially greater access and opportunity to shape, alter, or ratify the existing language rules. ... The only question is what kind of language leaders we will be" (p. 8).

They advocate that leaders assist others in moving from the language of complaint and blame to that of commitment and responsibility. They urge leaders to use language to identify the "big assumptions" that hold themselves and others (similar to the mental models discussed in Chapters 13 and 14) captive and to alter those assumptions based on experimentation and personal confirmation.

Dave Ellis (1998, 2000) also recognizes the power of language and conversation to either serve our purposes or to subvert them. Individuals can create or choose conversations that add purpose, joy, and energy to their lives, he believes. Leaders affect the "conversation space" of their organizations—what is talked about and how it is discussed. Ellis recommends that leaders choose and create conversations that pull them and their organizations toward their highest purposes and that emphasize planning, commitment, and promises made and kept.

In addition, obligatory language such as "should," "ought," and "must" when used by outsiders and by teachers and principals to describe their own decisions minimizes choice and the sense of commitment and responsibility that flow from it, Ellis believes. Speaking of life coaching clients, who are often leaders of schools and non-profit organizations, Dave Ellis (1998) writes, "Clients experience little freedom, little choice, and little possibility for change when using such language. Instead, they're likely to see themselves as helpless victims of the people and circumstances in their lives" (p. 70).

MY ASSUMPTIONS

- Leaders matter. What leaders think and do and how they interact with others has a profound effect on the level of performance of the organizations in which they work.

- Transformational change begins with a change in leaders.

- The nature of relationships among educators within schools, and between those in schools and all those outside of schools who seek to change them, is a critical factor in reform efforts.

- The language leaders use empowers or disempowers those with whom they interact.

FOR DISCUSSION

Write your assumptions regarding the areas addressed by my assumptions. Be specific and succinct. Dialogue with your group regarding your assumptions, remembering that the intention of dialogue is the nonjudgmental surfacing of assumptions rather than critiquing or seeking to change the assumptions of others.

Discuss your views regarding whether schools can be "directed" into new types of behavior.

Describe how leaders shape the "conversation space" of schools.

Specify what actions will be taken as a result of this discussion, who will take them, and by what date.

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THE POWER OF WHAT WE THINK

I wonder how many children's lives might be saved if we educators disclosed what we know to each other.

—Roland Barth (2001, p. 60)

Human conversation is the most ancient and easiest way to cultivate the conditions for change—personal change, community and organizational change, planetary change. If we can sit together and talk about what's important to us, we begin to come alive.

—Margaret Wheatley (2002, p. 3)

I can only change how I act if I stay aware of my beliefs and assumptions.

—Margaret Wheatley (2002, p. 18)

In Chapter 11, I claimed that habits of thought and behavior are more significant barriers to the improvement of professional learning than time, money, and the current state of research. As we saw in Chapter 12, "getting to the heart of the matter" means recognizing that leaders matter. These leaders begin by changing themselves, forming new types of relationships with colleagues and subordinates, disturbing the system rather than directing it, and choosing deep change over slow death. One of the most

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important aspects of change in leaders and in those with whom they work is a transformation in their "fundamental choices" and mental models.

FUNDAMENTAL CHOICES

"Fundamental choices" express our deepest aspirations and possess a tremendous power to shape and sustain high performance. They provide a filter for planning one's activities and sustain motivation during difficult times.

"A fundamental choice," Robert Fritz (1989) writes, "is a choice in which you commit yourself to a basic life orientation or a basic state of being" (p. 188). Examples include being the predominant creative force in your life, being true to what is highest within you, and being healthy and free. Primary choices, Fritz says, are those we make about the major results we wish to create, and secondary choices are the steps we take toward achieving those results. Primary choices are often called results, goals, or objectives. Secondary choices are strategies or action plans.

Fundamental choices, Fritz says (1989), provide the foundation for primary and secondary choices. "When people make a fundamental choice to be true to what is highest in them, or when they make a choice to fulfill a purpose in their life, they can easily accomplish many changes that seemed impossible or improbable in the past" (p. 189).

Fundamental choices are most powerful, I believe, when they possess a moral component. Michael Fullan agrees. "I have argued ...," Fullan writes (2001), "that teachers are 'moral change agents'—that the moral purpose of schools is to make a difference in the lives of students and that making a difference is literally to make changes that matter" (p. 16). "Education, of all societal functions, has a strong moral component," Fullan continues. "There are deep theoretical and evolutionary reasons to believe that society will be stronger if education serves to enable people to work together to achieve higher purposes that serve both the individual and the collective good" (p. 271).

Roland Barth (2001) also agrees. "Perhaps the most powerful asset of the school-based reformer is moral outrage," he writes (p. 177). "An influential principal has the courage to stand alone," Barth adds. "She has a commitment, above all else, to doing what is best for children despite the dictates of others. She challenges assumptions and traditions and helps others do so as well" (p. 139). "It's time for a new conception of the school principal," he continues, "one based on a skilled, passionate, moral commitment to students' and teachers' learning—and to the leader's own learning" (p. 141).

Moral suasion also can help overcome the inertia inherent in most groups. "[T]he natural conservatism of groups can only be overcome by a leader's appeals to a manifestly moral necessity," James O'Toole (1996) points out. "The leader must convince the people with power of the rectitude of the proposed change" (p. 255).

School leaders sometimes make fundamental, primary, and secondary choices that fuel slow death spirals. For instance, principals may decide, consciously or unconsciously, that no matter what they will avoid conflicts with their supervisors or teachers. Because well-managed conflicts are important in decision making related to complex, important issues about which educators hold strong opinions, such disagreements are unlikely to be aired and resolved when leaders avoid such conflict.

Educational leaders sometimes also can make fundamental choices that lead to deep changes in themselves and the organizations in which they work, which in turn leads to significant improvements in student learning. A superintendent, for example, who has made a strong, public commitment to all students having a competent, caring teacher will approach all relevant decisions with a frame of reference formed by that commitment. (For an example, see "Fundamental choices determine quality of professional learning" in the September 2001 issue of *Results*.)

The choices described throughout this book (for instance, team-based learning and providing intensive in-classroom assistance to teachers) are secondary choices. When they are not aligned with more basic fundamental and primary choices, they are difficult to sustain and often are withdrawn at the first signs of resistance or challenge. That is why the quality of staff development rarely exceeds our ambitions for student learning. Don't-rock-the-boat fundamental choices lead to modest goals for student achievement (primary choice), which in turn can be achieved with only modest staff development efforts (secondary choice).

The power of fundamental choices can be harnessed to motivate and sustain change. Quinn (2000) describes the power of fundamental choices this way: "The individuals, groups, teams, and organizations will not change until they can identify and embrace their potential, that is, really grasp what they are capable of achieving. This will not happen until one person, somewhere, makes a fundamental choice and begins to demonstrate a new way of being. This will result in new actions, words, and commitment" (p. 94).

This occurs, Quinn (2000) contends, because our enthusiasm and commitment are contagious. "People around us are moved in ways that are subtle but powerful. We become living symbols of a new vision. We send out new signals to everyone around us, and if we

are in an organization, our very presence disrupts old routines. ... A new dialogue is born and the culture in which we are participating begins to change" (p. 113).

MENTAL MODELS

Educators' mental models and sense of individual and collective efficacy (a particular kind of mental model by which we judge our ability to affect change) play key roles in improving practice. They can either limit people's ability to change or serve as driving forces to reform. The most potent of those mental constraints—which are often invisible to those who hold them and can only be inferred from their actions—are those that claim that only some students can achieve at high levels and that teaching is a natural talent that cannot be improved through study and practice.

Educators' beliefs about students' capacities to learn, teachers' capacities to teach, and the requirements of individual and collective change are critical barriers to significant improvement. So, too, is a sense of powerlessness and resignation experienced by many teachers and administrators. If educational leaders believe things cannot be improved or that they lack the ability to produce improvements, they will not create action plans and expend effort to do that which is viewed as impossible. Educators' mental models and belief in their ability to affect change serve either as serious impediments to change or as strong forces that affect improvement.

Mental models are our beliefs and perceptions, the images and assumptions that are an important part of who we are. Some people use the terms "paradigms" or "scripts" as synonyms. Because they are often hidden from view, they may remain covert and undiscussed, with their influence on behavior going unrecognized. Because they are undiscussed, it is easy to assume everyone shares a common view of reality, which is typically not the case.

"Our behavior and our attitudes," Peter Senge writes (2000), "are shaped by the images, assumptions, and stories that we carry in our minds of ourselves, other people, institutions, and every aspect of the world. ... Because mental models are usually tacit, existing below the level of awareness, they are often untested and unexamined..." (p. 67).

Beliefs are also important to Asa Hilliard (Sparks, 1997). "Another important part of ensuring competent teachers for all students has to do with the beliefs we hold about whether lower performing teachers can become powerful teachers ...," he argues. "In the same way that we develop a belief in kids by observing successful students who we wouldn't expect to achieve, we often believe particular teachers can't improve through staff development. We do have an empirical record that demonstrates that teachers can take on new energy and

use new strategies that make them successful. So it's extremely important that we maintain the faith in the ability of teachers to grow and meet our expectations" (p. 24).

"Improving instructional practice requires a change in beliefs, norms, and values about what it is possible to achieve as well as in the actual practices that are designed to bring achievement," Richard Elmore (2002) asserts (p. 18). Fullan (2001) notes the importance of leaders' views about the change process. "The assumptions we make about change are powerful and frequently subconscious sources of action," he writes. "When we begin to understand what change is as people experience it, we begin also to see clearly that assumptions made by planners of change are extremely important determinants of whether the realities of implementation get confronted or ignored" (p. 108).

A major barrier to change, according to Senge (Webber, 1999), is the notion that human institutions are like machines rather than embodiments of nature. "The company-as-a-machine model fits how people think about and operate conventional companies," he says (p. 182). Noting that most change efforts aren't successful, Senge (Webber 1999) argues that "... what we need are gardeners. We keep trying to drive change—when what we need to do is cultivate change" (p. 184).

Senge (2000) lists a number of out-dated "industrial-age assumptions" about learning and school—children are deficient and schools fix them, there are smart kids and dumb kids, schools communicate "the truth," learning is primarily individualistic, and competition accelerates learning.

Kati Haycock, Craig Jerald, and Sandra Huang (2001) focus their attention on a myth that they describe as powerful and wrong: "It says that 'disadvantaged' children might learn some basic skills, but that their home lives are just too deprived to allow them to attain the same levels of learning as their affluent suburban peers," they write (p. 5). What must be done, they believe is clear. "If we are to finally close achievement gaps, we must do two things. We must kill the myth that hobbles the thinking and action of too many of our colleagues inside and outside of education. And we must learn from the successful schools, districts and states at the frontier in order to fashion solutions that fit the problem" (p. 11). Several beliefs that are particularly powerful in impeding or promoting high-quality professional learning are contrasted in Figure 1 (see next page).

Paul Kelleher (2001), writing on behalf of a discussion group of superintendents, says superintendents must perform two overarching functions: changing people's beliefs and attitudes about capacity and transforming the system to support teaching and learning. Of the first function, Kelleher cites the value of building cultural beliefs regarding the impor-

IMPEDING BELIEFS	PROMOTING BELIEFS
Students who live in poverty or who lack supportive families cannot be expected to learn very much. Consequently, powerful forms of professional development are wasted on schools with high concentrations of such students.	Quality teaching fed by powerful professional learning can make a difference in all schools.
Teaching is a low-skilled, non-intellectual activity. Consequently, sustained, intellectually rigorous forms of professional development squander precious resources.	Teaching is a complex, cognitively demanding task that requires sustained, intellectually rigorous forms of professional learning.
Teachers know what to do to teach to high standards; they simply have to be induced to do so. Consequently, motivational speakers or threats of negative consequences are sufficient to improve teaching and student learning.	Teachers are not withholding their best efforts. In most cases they simply do not know how to do what they are being asked to do.
The knowledge and skills required to be a good teacher can be "delivered" in workshops. Consequently, it is sufficient to "expose" teachers to new ideas in workshops or large group settings.	Professional development that promotes a deep understanding of subject matter and a wide repertoire of research-based teaching strategies is essential if all students are to achieve at high levels. Knowledge of good teaching is constructed by teachers through discussion, problem solving, action research, and other active learning processes.
There is one right way to teach, lead, or reform schools. "Experts" outside of the school know what it is and it is teachers' job to do it. Teachers have little knowledge or skill to offer to school improvement efforts.	There are multiple pathways to becoming a successful school. Teachers bring critical knowledge and skills to this task. Their capacity to invent solutions to significant educational problems is a significant, untapped resource. (Chapter 14 will be devoted to exploring the implications of this belief in dramatically improving the quality of professional learning in schools.)

Figure 1

tance of effort in expanding intelligence and increasing learning and of striking a balance between asserting one's own convictions and carefully listening to the views of others.

SELF-EFFICACY

"Teachers are often uncertain about how to influence students, and even about whether they are having an influence," Fullan (2001) observes (p. 33). Likewise, principals and superintendents are uncertain about how they can influence teachers and whether their efforts are making a difference. This confusion often causes them to fall back to their "default settings," the most common but least effective change strategies—issuing directives, exhorting improved performance, and establishing a system of rewards and punishments.

"[T]he culture of passivity and helplessness that pervades many schools works directly against the possibility of improvement ...," Elmore (2002) notes. "Teachers and administrators learn this culture of passivity and helplessness as a consequence of working in dysfunctional organizations, not as a consequence of choosing to think and behave that way. Improving the organization will change what adults learn" (p. 30).

Amy Zeldin and Frank Pajares (2000) cite Albert Bandura's definition of self-efficacy "... as people's judgments of their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance" (p. 216). They point out that efficacy may come from mastery experiences (interpreted results of one's past performance), vicarious experiences (watching others perform a task), verbal persuasion to encourage the extra effort and persistence necessary for success, and physical and emotional states that range from stress and depression to positive moods and optimism. Noting the importance of both skill and will, the researchers conclude that "... self-efficacy beliefs should be developed in concert with the corresponding competence" (pp. 242-243).

"The self-efficacy beliefs that people hold," Zeldin and Pajares (2000) write, "influence the choices they make, the amount of effort they expend, their resilience to encountered hardships, their persistence in the face of adversity, the anxiety they experience, and the level of success they ultimately achieve. Individuals with strong self-efficacy beliefs work harder and persist longer when they encounter difficulties than those who doubt their abilities. Results from research on self-efficacy beliefs indicate that these judgments of personal competence are often stronger predictors of behavior than are prior accomplishments, skill, or knowledge" (p. 218).

Local evaluation studies, particularly those that take the form of action research or

similar processes generated by teachers, promote teachers' sense of efficacy because they reveal the day-to-day effects of new practices on student learning and performance on tasks teachers value. (See Chapter 11 for a more detailed discussion of this idea.) Tom Guskey (1986) argues that well-designed staff development will produce changes in teachers' practice that in turn improves student learning. These changes, Guskey holds, then influence teachers' perceptions and attitudes. Put succinctly, behavior change that produces desired results increases an individual's sense of efficacy.

Kati Haycock (Sparks, 2000) sees teachers' belief systems and will to change as the largest barriers to significant improvement. She also views skill-building as a critical strategy in changing beliefs. Haycock suggests teachers and principals visit schools like theirs that are getting better results and explode myths by sharing data and examples from such schools. "In my experience," she concludes, "it is not worthwhile to attack the issues of beliefs without simultaneously building skills (p. 39). Haycock also notes that, "When teachers think something is important and valuable, they find a way to make it happen" (p. 39).

An individual's sense of efficacy also may act in concert with that of others. For instance, Valerie Lee and Suzanna Loeb (2000) propose a continuum for viewing a faculty's collective sense of responsibility for student learning. "On one end of the spectrum," they write, "we would find schools where most teachers take personal responsibility for the success or failure of their own teaching. Such teachers would see teaching and learning as an interactive process, with students cast as active participants, rather than as a one-way flow of information from teachers to students. On the other end of the spectrum, we would find schools where most teachers see potential impediments between their own teaching and students' learning, namely, students' ability (or lack of it), students' family background, or their motivation. If students do not learn, these teachers would tend to locate the blame for low performance outside of themselves and their own teaching" (p. 8). Their research determined that teachers' sense of collective responsibility had a positive influence on student learning.

Barth (2001) proposes teacher leadership as a critical means to enhance efficacy and dramatically improve schools. Teacher leaders, he also notes, benefit in several ways: "Through enhanced companionship and collegiality with other adults, they reduce feelings of isolation; through improving their schools, they experience personal and professional satisfaction; they enjoy a sense of instrumentality, investment, and membership in the wider school community; they experience the new learning about schools, the process of change,

and about themselves that accompanies being leaders; and they experience professional invigoration and replenishment, which spill over into their classroom teaching. These teachers become owners and investors in the school, rather than mere tenants" (p. 117).

Kegan and Lahey (2001) say humans are often unknowingly tethered by self-protective and contradictory commitments that with little awareness undermine their expressed purposes and goals. "[F]or every commitment we genuinely hold to bring about some important change, there is another commitment we hold that has the effect of preventing the change," they write (p. 63). For instance, a principal committed to ensuring quality teaching for all students may find that she has another not very clearly articulated and entirely conscious commitment to avoiding conflict because of fears that such conflict will quickly escalate out of control and she will be viewed less favorably by other staff members.

Kegan and Lahey (2001) also contend that "big assumptions" firmly hold countervailing commitments in place. These assumptions, Kegan and Lahey argue, are treated as accurate representations of reality rather than as tentative conclusions and have at their core a firm conviction that dire consequences will follow should they be violated. Figure 2 (see next page) illustrates a four-column method of portraying this underlying dynamic.

"Big assumptions" derive their influence through their relative invisibility and the presumption of dire consequences they carry. Unfortunately, staff development too often ignores them. "Much of what goes under the banner of professional development," Kegan and Lahey write, "amounts to helping us develop more skills or capacities to cope, but cope within the worlds of our assumptive designs. The design itself is never in question, or even visible" (p. 71).

Chapter 14—the final chapter in this book—further explains my belief that teachers and principals have the capacity to invent solutions to most of the common problems of teaching and learning and that such invention motivates and sustains future work. While all solutions to educational problems cannot be found in schools, the creative potential of educators to find innovative methods for improving student learning is a significant and often overlooked resource.

COLUMN 1 Genuinely held commitment	COLUMN 2 What I do that works against my commitment	COLUMN 3 The competing commitment that generates column 2	COLUMN 4 My big assumption
SUPERINTENDENT			
I am committed to operating less as a manager and more as a mentor with the principals.	I do not genuinely collaborate with the principals around the redesign of their schools. My non-negotiables are very large in scope.	I am committed to having things go my way, to dramatic and fast success which I think requires my playing an active, hands-on role.	If I do not exercise widespread authority and control, all forward momentum for change will be lost. The principals will not do enough of what they should, quickly enough, or at a high enough level.
PRINCIPAL			
I am committed to powerful learning experiences for every child in my school and to functioning as my school's Chief Instructional Officer.	I spend too little time in classrooms and talking with teachers about their work and too much time as "plant manager," "chief scheduler," or doing other less essential things.	I am committed to not making messes for my superintendent, not losing her high opinion of me.	If I create a problem for my superintendent, it will irreparably harm my relationship with her.
TEACHER			
I am committed to wholeheartedly participating in our instructional redesign plan.	I am not getting involved, avoiding, procrastinating.	I am committed to not being disappointed yet again, to not letting myself hope for real change when that does not occur, to not fooling myself.	If I let myself hope again and have my hopes dashed, I will not be able to recover.

Figure 2

Source: "Inner conflict, inner strengths: An interview with Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey," by Dennis Sparks, *Journal of Staff Development*, (Vol. 22, No. 3) Summer 2002, p.68.

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MY ASSUMPTIONS

- Fundamental choices are most powerful when they possess a moral component.

- The fundamental choices made by leaders have a profound effect on the primary and secondary choices they and others make.

- Educators' mental models and sense of individual and collective efficacy play key roles in improving practice.

- Behavior changes that produce desired results increases an individual's sense of efficacy.

FOR DISCUSSION

Write your assumptions regarding the areas addressed by my assumptions. Be specific and succinct. Dialogue with your group regarding your assumptions, remembering that the intention of dialogue is the nonjudgmental surfacing of assumptions rather than critiquing or seeking to change the assumptions of others.

Discuss the fundamental assumptions that influence your individual and collective work in schools. Consider other assumptions that would lead to more powerful learning for both students and staff members.

Describe beliefs you authentically hold regarding teaching, learning, and leadership that promote high levels of learning for all students and those beliefs which impede it.

Specify what actions will be taken as a result of this discussion, who will take them, and by what date.

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CREATE SCHOOLS IN WHICH EVERYONE'S JOB IS TO LEARN

Learning, above and beyond the lab rat level, is a change in a person, brought about through conversation. ... The best and most memorable conversations are often the most dangerous. They are risky, but just as relationships without risk never develop trust, conversation without danger fail to open us up to the potential for change.

—Ron Zemke (2001, p. 14)

These are always the conditions that bring out our best—we're focused on something we really care about; we work intensely together, inventing solutions as needed, we take all kinds of risks; we communicate constantly.

—Margaret Wheatley (2002, p. 126)

Our greatest joy no matter what our role comes from creating. In that process people become aware that they are able to do things they once thought were impossible. They have empowered themselves, which in turn empowers those with whom they interact.

—Robert Quinn (Sparks, 2001, p. 51)

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Leaders matter because they can affect the fundamental choices, mental models, and sense of efficacy of those with whom they interact. They are particularly powerful in leading communities of learning when they stand with others as equals and partners to assist them in creating that which initially may have been viewed as impossible—schools in which all students and staff members learn and perform at high levels.

As mentioned briefly in Chapter 13, I believe there are multiple pathways by which schools can become successful. From my perspective, teachers and principals bring critical knowledge and skills to this task and their capacity to invent solutions to problems of teaching and learning is a significant, untapped resource.

THE CAPACITY OF SCHOOLS TO CREATE RESULTS FOR STUDENTS

People feel most alive and committed to significant change when they create, particular when they deeply care about the things they create. Ownership and sustained energy during the change process come from meaningful participation in creating that which would not exist without the intention of the creators.

Roland Barth (2001) makes explicit a fundamental assumption about school reform held by many education leaders and policy makers that he finds troubling: "[B]ehind the models, the rubrics, the principles, the analyses of the problems, and the prescriptions for improving them was a very chilling assumption: schools are not capable of improving themselves" (p. xx). Individuals who hold this view believe teachers and principals are unable to make significant improvements unless guided by "experts," directed by district offices, or threatened or bribed by policy makers. "Sadly, our profession seems neither to trust nor to rely on the accumulated wisdom of its own practitioners," Barth observes (p. 55).

As a result, educators become dependent on outsiders and, as Barth (2001) expresses it, masters of the question, "What am I supposed to do?" (p. 3). "Our profession desperately needs school-based reformers," Barth argues. "A school-based reformer is an educator who works in the school and is seldom heard to say, 'They'll never let us,' and seldom asks, 'What am I supposed to do?' " (p. 5).

This problem can be overcome, I believe, by creating results school by school through perpetually "reinventing the wheel." Barth (2001) says it this way: "If you want to predict the future, create it! This is precisely what school people now have the opportunity—and the imperative—to do" (p. 213). And the ideas in this chapter provide a stimulus for genu-

ine invention and experimentation in schools and school systems.

The wheel of change proposed here turns on a belief that "craft knowledge" and the generation of knowledge by teachers can significantly improve schools. A second important belief is that when teachers feel that their knowledge and skill is valued they will actively pull outside research and other sources of expertise toward the school. "When we value craft knowledge," Barth (2001) says, "we develop a school culture hospitable to learning. A central part of the work of the school-based reformer is to find ways to honor, reveal, exchange, and celebrate the craft knowledge that resides in every schoolhouse" (p. 62).

Peter Senge (Sparks, 2001) believes willingness to change is heightened when educators slow down to identify what they really care about and want to create. "What I mean by creating is directing our energies into bringing things into reality that we really care about …," he says. "Most situations in life don't have a single right answer. Instead, there are more effective and less effective actions. In my experience, the most effective actions arise when we live the question, 'What do we want to create?' This is not all that matters—we also need ideas about how we can move forward. But vitality comes when we move in the direction of what we truly want to bring into reality. The key to all this is really pretty simple—believing that every person has the capacity to create" (pp. 45-46).

While I deeply respect the capacity of the school to make significant improvements in student learning without extensive outside assistance, I do not believe that all capacity for improvement resides within schools. (That is why in previous chapters I emphasized the essential role played by district offices and the value of research and external networks of teachers, principals, and schools.) I agree with Michael Fullan (2001) who concludes, "First and probably foremost is the realization that all successful schools and districts are proactively plugged into an external network of resources, professional development, and other forms of assistance" (p. 195). Fullan (2001), however, adds a caveat: "Ultimately, no amount of outside intervention can produce the motivation and specificity of best solutions for every setting" (p. 271).

CREATE MORE POWERFUL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

With these ideas as a framework, the remainder of this chapter explores three ways that schools may create more powerful professional learning for teachers.

1. Create conditions within schools and school districts that "amplify positive deviance."

The following items provide a context for this unusual concept:

- Peter Temes (2001), president of the Great Books Foundation, recounts the story of a recently-retired superintendent who told him, "The very best thing you can do for a superintendent ... is not to give him more money, more buildings, or a better contract. Instead, give him a tool to make his average teachers just a little bit better, and you'll see a vastly greater impact across the district than any model school or blue-ribbon program will ever bring" (p. 36).
- "Typically, standards reinforce the best practice of the best teachers," Judy Carr and Douglas Harris (2001) write. "As you begin to look at current work with standards, you will likely find that you can retain much of teachers' current practice along with curriculum documents that have already been revised in response to standards" (p. 5).
- Kati Haycock and Sandra Huang (2001) cite a Boston study of teacher effects which they describe as "fairly typical" that revealed in just one academic year the top third of teachers produced as much as six times the learning growth as the bottom third.
- Kevin Dobbs (2000), in an article on the power of informal learning within organizations, quotes author Nancy Dixon who observes, "Our unshakable trust in experts led us to act as if knowledge only resides in a few small pockets of an organization. But I think that view is changing" (p. 54). Dobbs also cites author Chris Turner: "People are learning all the time. We make a big mistake when we assume that knowledge comes only from certain positions in the corporate hierarchy. ... There is some deep belief that knowledge is a substance that can be packaged and placed in people's hands. It ain't so" (p. 56). This is a departure, Turner says, from the basic premise of teaching and training: "Tell them and they will know" (p. 56).
- Not only do teaching practices vary considerably within a school, so do collaborative practices vary between departments within a given school. For example, Milbrey McLaughlin and Joan Talbert's study (2001) of professional communities within schools found that most high school departments lacked a culture of sharing and jointly-developed practice, and that differences sometimes existed between departments within the same school.
- Tony Wagner (2001) concludes: "[T]he task of the leader is not to tell teachers what (best practices) are but to create opportunities for educators to discover them for themselves. ... Effective leaders give teams of experienced teachers—the building leaders—time to visit successful schools and to discuss what they've learned with colleagues. Teachers need to see models of much more successful classrooms in order to believe that all

students can succeed" (p. 382).

- "Consultancy is about building capacity, motivation, and commitment to engage in improvements," Fullan (2001) writes (p. 185). "A more fundamental conclusion," Fullan adds, "is that it is not so much the product of reforms that worked elsewhere that needs to be replicated, but the conditions under which the reforms worked" (p. 191). A deep understanding of local context and culture are critical to successful change efforts, he concludes.

Taken together, these ideas are combined and exemplified in an unusual and promising approach drawn from the field of nutrition—amplifying positive deviance—as described by Richard Pascale and his co-authors (2000). Malnutrition, they note, was a serious problem in Vietnam following the war, a problem like that faced by other developing countries that is typically viewed as unsolvable because of its systemic properties—poverty, low levels of education, lack of access to clean water and sanitation. Attempts to address these larger problems or provide massive infusion of supplemental food has had little long-term effect.

Save the Children, however, decided in the early 1990s to apply a living systems model known as "positive deviance." "Positive Deviance," Pascale and others write (2000), "does not impose a nutritional solution. Rather, this model relies on 'respectfully assisting evolution' by identifying children who are the 'nutritionally fittest' (i.e., positively deviant) and scaling up a solution that is already working in the community. ...The design was aimed to discover what was already working against all odds, rather than engineering a solution based on an external formula" (pp. 176-177).

Each community examined its conventional wisdom regarding nutrition and health care, conducted an inquiry to uncover unconventional nutritional practices that were advantageous to children's health, and made those practices accessible to everyone. Pascale and his colleagues report that within six months over two-thirds of the children had gained weight and within two years 85 percent were no longer clinically malnourished. The Positive Deviance approach "... was scaled up consistent with its philosophy of discovering unique positive deviant solutions in each area—an approach that is very different from a socially engineered 'best-practices' rollout," they observe (p. 177). "Essential to this approach is first, respect for, and second, alliance with the intelligence and capacities residing within the village. This model can be applied to other kinds of change. ... The wisdom to solve problems exists and needs to be discovered within each and every community," they conclude (pp. 178-179).

Jerry Sternin, who through Save the Children brought the notion of Positive Deviance to Vietnamese villages, believes you cannot import change from the outside. "The traditional model for social and organizational change doesn't work," he says. "It never has. You can't bring permanent solutions in from outside" (Dorsey, 2000, p. 286).

The lessons of positive deviance in Vietnamese villages, Robert Quinn (Sparks, 2001) contends, can be contrasted with methods used to improve schools and other organizations. "What we usually do in such a situation is have experts determine exactly what happened, publish it, and then tell others to replicate it. This is a disastrous prescription. If you take the Save the Children story, they began with deep appreciation of the Vietnamese villages. They looked at what was happening extremely closely. … When we think about the lessons of positive deviancy, we can never provide such prescriptive lists because each district or school is unique …" (p. 50).

An example of such an approach in schools can be found in Brazosport, Texas. Joan Richardson (1998) reported that the school district virtually eliminated the achievement gap between racial groups and socioeconomic groups by tapping the talents of successful teachers and spreading their strategies around the district. Disaggregated test results were used to identify teachers in high poverty schools who were very successful. One teacher in particular had an approach that she was invited to teach to other teachers, first in her school and then districtwide. The result was an "exemplary" rating from the Texas Education Agency based on 90 percent or more of the students in every sub-group in every school performing successfully on the mandatory state assessment. Richardson quotes Patricia Davenport, a district administrator: "As teachers have learned more about how to improve their instruction, they have become even hungrier to learn still more. Now, she said, her challenge is to find ways to add time into their professional week for more staff learning" (p. 7).

2. Create through dialogue and other reflective experiences different mental models and results-oriented beliefs.

Because school leaders shape the conversation space within their circles of influence, they can have tremendous influence on educators' mental models and the collective meaning regarding innovation and change held by those with whom they work. "How we converse with one another is fundamental to the way we work together, the decisions we make, and the results we create," write Linda Ellinor and Glenna Gerard (1998, p. 59).

From my perspective, professional development will rise to its full potential only when

leaders replace assumptions that limit the potential of teachers and students with others that affirm possibility and provide guidance for action. Mental models can be altered by having experiences that create cognitive dissonance (for instance, visiting a classroom or school that is having a type of success with students that the visitor previously viewed as impossible) and reflecting on those experiences, and through specially designed "conversations" that surface assumptions and provide opportunities for their alteration. As you may recall from this book's introduction, I regard the specialized form of conversation known as dialogue as one of the most effective conversation modes in affecting underlying beliefs and assumptions.

"I particularly value conversations which are meetings on the borderline of what I understand and what I don't, with people who are different from myself," observes Theodore Zeldin (2000, p. 88) He believes a new type of conversation that provides awareness of choices and inspires courage can transform the person and society.

Such conversation is based on honesty and a willingness to view life as a series of experiments. "What matters," Zeldin (2000) observes, "is whether you are willing to think for yourself, and to say what you think" (p. 15). Elaborating on that idea, Zeldin notes, "Two individuals, conversing honestly, can be inspired by the feeling that they are engaged in a joint enterprise, aimed at inventing an art of living together which has not been tried before" (p. 31). Still later, he observes, "It is by conversation with others, by mixing different voices with our own, that we can turn our individual life into an original work of art" (p. 46). Through honest conversation, Zeldin tells us, "[O]rdinary people can make big changes by improving the way they relate to each other in daily life" (p. 99).

Barth (2001) also advocates conversation. "Conversations have the capacity to promote reflection, to create and exchange craft knowledge, and to help improve the organization. Schools, I'm afraid, deal more in meetings—in talking at and being talked at—than in conversation" (p. 68).

Peter Senge (1990) believes dialogue is the form of conversation that is most likely to transform mental models and behavior. "In dialogue," he writes, "a group explores complex difficult issues from many points of view. Individuals suspend their assumptions but they communicate their assumptions freely. The result is a free exploration that brings to the surface the full depth of people's experience and thought, and yet can move beyond their individual views" (p. 241). Dialogue is most effective, Senge says, when participants suspend assumptions, make their views open to influence, and see one another as colleagues in

a quest for deeper insight and clarity.

Ellinor and Gerard (1998) contend that a deeper type of listening is an essential aspect of dialogue. "How we listen, to what and to whom we listen, and the assumptions we listen through all frame our perception of reality," they write. "Listening may be the single most powerful creative act we perform; we listen and create reality based on what we hear in each moment" (pp. 98-99).

Dialogue may surface conflict that was not previously evident. "[O]ne of the most reliable indicators of a team that is continually learning is the visible conflict of ideas," Senge (1990) observes. "In great teams, conflict becomes productive. ... The loftier the vision, the more uncertain we are how it is to be achieved. ... Conflict becomes, in effect, part of the ongoing dialogue" (p. 249).

An important part of dialogue is exposing to public scrutiny the thinking that lies behind participants' views. "[O]ne of the most useful skills of a learning team," Senge (1990) argues, "would be the ability to recognize when people are not inquiring into each other's thinking, when they are not exposing their thinking in a way that encourages others to inquire into it" (p. 256).

Acknowledging that talk about teaching can take many forms and involve many partners, Parker Palmer (1998) asserts that "... it can transform teaching and learning. But it will happen only if leaders expect it, invite it, and provide hospitable space for the conversation to occur" (p. 160).

Kegan and Lahey's (2001) four-column method (page 13-10) provides a way to surface and alter beliefs. Through this process, individuals clarify their commitments, determine actions that are preventing the realization of those commitments, identify commitments that compete with those listed in column one, and ascertain "big assumptions" that support the competing commitments. Educators can alter their "big assumptions," the authors contend, through ongoing participation in "assumption groups" or "transformational learning groups" to "stay in relationship to these ideas" over time.

In these groups, participants actively look for experiences that cast doubt on their "big assumptions," viewing them as hypotheses rather than "truth." Participants then design and run safe, modest tests of the assumptions, with successful modest tests leading up to larger ones. "[E]ven quite small changes in our big assumptions can lead to quite large changes in our sense of our possibilities, the choices, and moves we can consider making," Kegan and Lahey write (2001, p. 86).

3. Create a social movement, if only in your school or school system.

Andy Hargreaves, Robert Quinn, and Parker Palmer agree that a "social movement" may be required to fundamentally alter established institutions such as schools. Hargreaves (2001) observes that social movements "... are rooted not in self-interest but in a clear moral purpose that ultimately works to the benefit of all. ... The principles of social movements are not compromised for short-term tactical gains. ... [T]hey are committed to a long-term future that does not protect or preserve the interest of one single group but advances the good of all our children and grandchildren for generations to come" (p. 376).

Quinn (2000) concurs. "In over 25 years of working on issues of organizational change," he writes, "I have come to the conclusion that most important changes require the creation of a social movement. It is, in fact, more accurate to say that change is a social movement. The first step in creating a social movement is having a single actor who asks questions: What is the right thing to do? What result do I want? How do I behave in a more authentic way?" (pp. 53-54).

"Is it possible to embody our best insights about teaching and learning in a social movement that might revitalize education?" Palmer (1998) asks. "Grant, for the moment, that institutions are as powerful and resistant as the pessimists say they are. The question then becomes, 'Has significant social change ever been achieved in the face of massive institutional opposition?' The answer seems clear: only in the face of such opposition has significant social change been achieved" (pp. 163-164).

Palmer (1998) says that a movement begins "... when isolated individuals who suffer from a situation that needs changing decide to live 'divided no more.' These people come to a juncture where they must choose between allowing selfhood to die or claiming the identify and integrity from which good living, as well as good teaching, comes" (p. 167). Individuals stop blaming institutional conditions for their current state, he argues, and realize they can no longer collaborate in something that violates their integrity. "The courage to live divided no more, and to face the punishment that may follow," he writes, "comes from this simple insight: no punishment anyone lays on you could possibly be worse than the punishment you lay on yourself by conspiring in your own diminishment. With that insight comes the ability to open cell doors that were never locked in the first place and to walk into new possibilities that honor the claims of one's heart" (p. 171).

A FEW FINAL THOUGHTS

If you have read this entire book, you have a sense of what professional learning might

look like in schools and the role of district offices in promoting professional learning communities for all teachers within all schools. You also have greater clarity about the type of professional development that assists principals in becoming instructional leaders, teachers in becoming leaders within their schools and districts, and teachers in becoming more effective in promoting high levels of learning for all their students.

If you have engaged in dialogue with colleagues you may well have developed a different point of view regarding critical professional development issues. If you also explored the discussion topics at the conclusion of each chapter, you undoubtedly have a deeper understanding of these issues. And if you identified next actions and held yourselves and others accountable for their completion, then significant changes in professional learning within your school system or school may already have occurred.

By traveling with me "to the heart of the matter" in Chapters 11-14, you have explored my views regarding leadership, mental models, and the creative potential of teachers and principals. It is my sincerest hope that the conclusion of this book is only a way station on your journey to creating with a sense of urgency high quality professional learning for all teachers and administrators in all schools for the benefit of all students.

MY ASSUMPTIONS

- There are multiple pathways to becoming a successful school.

- Teachers and principals bring critical knowledge and skills to school improvement and their capacity to invent solutions to the problems of teaching and learning is a significant, untapped resource.

- "Positive deviant" teachers have an important contribution to make to their schools.

- Important changes in established institutions require something akin to social movements.

FOR DISCUSSION

Write your assumptions regarding the areas addressed by my assumptions. Be specific and succinct. Dialogue with your group regarding your assumptions, remembering that the intention of dialogue is the nonjudgmental surfacing of assumptions rather than critiquing or seeking to change the assumptions of others.

Describe the extent to which the process of dialogue encouraged in this book has affected your mental models regarding professional learning. Be specific.

Discuss your individual and collective visions for the professional learning you wish to create in your school or school system.

Specify what actions will be taken as a result of this discussion, who will take them, and by what date.

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